TRUTHS FOR BELIEVERS

By J. A. T.

(Enlarged Edition)

Truth for Believers.

By John Alfred Trench.

NEW AND ENLARGED EDITION.

LONDON:
G. MORRISH, 20, PATERNOSTER SQUARE, E.C.
1906.

CONTENTS.

	PAGE
The Object and Character of True Service	1
"His own which were in the World"	15
"Let not your Heart be Troubled"	30
"The Men which Thou gavest Me"	43
"He is not Here"	65
The Path of the True Servant	78
Wisdom's Delights (Parts I. and II.)	97
Rest	123
How the Cup runs over	131
God with us. God for us. God in us	136
"Where dwellest Thou?"	151
Joy	170
"The Joy of the Lord"	181
Our Association with Christ	197
The Soul's Preparation for the Assembly	214
"His Banner over Me is Love"	230
Heart Response to Christ	238
"This do in Remembrance of Me"	242
The Three Witnesses; or, the Spirit, the Water and the Blood	243

TRUTH FOR BELIEVERS.

THE OBJECT AND CHARACTER OF TRUE SERVICE.

"Wheresoever this gospel shall be preached throughout the whole world, this also that she hath done shall be spoken of for a memorial of her." (Mark xiv. 9.)

HAVE any of you, beloved in the Lord, been led to ask the reason of this word of the Lord; and to inquire into the connection between this woman's act and the preaching of the gospel throughout the world? I think we see this very clearly when we remember God's ultimate aim in causing the testimony of His grace to be rendered to us. We know the *immediate* result, for the conscience that has been awakened to the sense of its need; the cross of Christ is presented to it, where the righteousness of God has rested in the judgment due to sin, and "we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." (Rom. v. 1.) Much indeed remains still to be told of *present* access to and standing in the divine favour; of the joy of *hope* that looks out from this standpoint and fastens itself on the glory of God, ere we turn to our path of trial in the world; of joy in the very trials, too, because of the rich experience learned of God in them; Himself—the climax of our joy. (Ver. 11.) There is in the gospel what we have been saved

from, but there is also what we have been saved into, even till our hearts find their home in the Father's house, "accepted in the beloved." A divine mystery of love, too, has still to be disclosed to us there. There are counsels of God for the glory and joy of Christ, eternal counsels hid from all other ages, but now made known to us, in which we, too, have our part and interest, as given with all that are Christ's to Him, to be His church, His body, His bride.

What rich revelations are these, beloved, of the love of God! And yet there is that which goes beyond them all in the object of God in communicating them to us. He would make Christ known to us according to His own delight in Him. How rich the grace that has not only saved us from hell but that would now introduce us into communion with the very joys of God! For the Lord Jesus who has become precious to us is the eternal joy of God. Never until salvation was fully known could our hearts have been free for occupations such as these. But now that salvation is ours in Christ (and far more than ever thought could have conceived), God would have us enter into His estimate of Christ. He would lead us into divine intelligence of His intrinsic worth and excellency, that losing self and all beside in contemplation of Christ, we may wonder, worship and adore Him. God will have it so in heaven. Then perfectly the gospel will have accomplished the object for which it was sent forth.

We see it so in the Book of the Revelation of Jesus Christ. Are the redeemed out of every kindred, tongue, people and nation seen in the innermost circle round the throne? (Chap. v.) The central

object is "a Lamb as it had been slain." Every eye is fixed, every heart occupied with Him; crowns are cast at His feet, harps tuned in His praise. Jesus is still their one-absorbing thought, their endless theme throughout eternity.

What were they once? What were we? "Dead in trespasses and sins"; "alienated from the life of God"; "without Christ," or hope! But now, "made nigh by the blood" of that slain One. Brought into the deepest secrets of the heart of God, even into His own estimate of His Son. Thus the object of God is attained—others with Him have known, loved and prized His well-beloved, so as to count Him the joy of all joys, the very heaven of their heaven. Sinners of earth have been brought into unison with the mind of heaven and of God. Who more fit to lead the richest praise of heaven and to *raise* the note, "Thou art worthy," to be taken up by angels and the universe in eternal song? The rich and glorious monotony of heaven will be *Jesus, Jesus, Jesus!*

This, then, beloved fellow-servants of the Lord, being the aim and desire of God in the gospel, have we sympathy with God as we preach it? Is our object to make known the Lord Jesus in all the varied charms and excellences of His person? Is it to present Him that He may be owned as "the chiefest among ten thousand, and the altogether lovely"? Is this the *object* of our service? Are His glory, beauty and attractions ever before our own eyes?

This seems to be the connection of thought in the Lord's mind at this time. There is a supper in the house of a poor leper, and we find Jesus there. He

is the Son whom the Father loved from eternity. "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." Here He is amongst us, sitting at meat in the house of Simon the leper, at Bethany. Ah! "He is despised and rejected of men"; men see *no beauty* that they should desire Him. The chief priests and scribes were just now seeking how they might take Him by craft and put Him to death. Such was *man's* estimate of Christ. What a wound to the heart of God! God said, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." But we—yes, we all once among the number—"hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not." Our eyes were indeed holden by sin and unbelief that we should not know Him.

While men thus conspired against Him, there was one at least in that house who entered in some measure into God's mind about His Christ. While others were occupied with the joy of sitting and eating with Him, happy in their nearness to Him (and well they might be), there was one who rose higher than all the rest; Mary—for it was no other, as John xii. tells us—was occupied with Jesus *for His own sake.* Her *previous training* had led to this. She had been found sitting at the feet of Jesus, hearing His word, while others were busied with serving Him. (Luke x. 38.) Mary had chosen "that good part, which shall not be taken away from her"—she was occupied with HIMSELF. Already, on earth, she had come to the springs of the joy of heaven. Jesus was even now to her her *all.* The feet of

Jesus had been Mary's school, and there she had been learning to enter into what He was in Himself. Her one lesson was *Jesus* in His own intrinsic value. Her eyes began to open to His matchless beauty and attractions, till at last she became dead to all other. In the scene before her Jesus is her only interest, her one absorbing thought. She forgets the guests, the supper table, all, in adoration of *Him.* She seems to say as she gazes upon Him, "I am sick of love." No *words* can express the sense of His worth, till at last, in divinely given intelligence, she breaks the alabaster box of ointment of spikenard, very precious, and pours it on His head. And thus in the silent language of a heart too full for utterance she ascribes to Him, as alone worthy, all that is counted costly and precious on earth. Precious intelligence in the thoughts of God, which had its full value for the heart of Christ, however the rest misinterpreted the act!

It is in human nature to love to be *known* and understood. This desire is found in Him, the very perfection of manhood. Earlier in His ministry on earth, when the cities, wherein most of His mighty works were done, repented not, He was constrained to say, "No man knoweth the Son but the Father." (Matt. xi. 27.) Misunderstood and unknown by men, He rests with comfort in the thought, "My Father knows me," and lays His head upon the bosom of His Father's love.

Here was one who taught of God seemed to understand something of His perfections, as the Father delighted in them. She began to *enter into His thoughts of His beloved Son.* In secret with Jesus,

walking in communion with Him, she had learnt them and gained capacity to enter into them, until no human words will suffice to express what she had found of intrinsic worth in Him.

The ointment poured on His head is just the necessary relief her heart seeks, bursting with the sense of what *He is*. Thus she adores and worships Him. And, O beloved! had not God His joy in this her appreciation of the Lord Jesus? Indeed, indeed He had. It is His will "that men should *honour* the Son even as they honour the Father." He looks for this very result of the gospel in our hearts. He says, "Unto you that believe *he is the preciousness*," and thus it was with Mary.

Oh, how much apparent zeal, activity, and earnestness, there may be which does not spring from the heart's appreciation of Christ at all! This was what was lacking in Martha. She was busied apparently *for* Jesus, making ready for Him, serving Him. But what does Jesus say? All service has its value in His eye, according to the measure in which the heart is engaged with Himself, as its first object. Now "Martha was cumbered about much serving." She was putting her *service* in the place of Jesus. He loves her too well to consent to her heart being thus engrossed. *He* wanted her to enjoy Himself. Mary entered thus into His mind; she felt He cared most of all for her heart, and gave it to Him. If Martha seeks to distract Mary too, *she* chooses rather to sit still at His feet and listen, as He delights to reveal Himself to her, and Jesus stamps Mary's choice with His approval: "Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things: but one thing is

needful: and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her."

Beloved, in this day of general activity is it not well to judge ourselves in the presence of God, as to how far our hearts are *with Him* in it? Are we not often (by our very service) drawn away from the place where we ought to be—at the feet of Christ? Is not this the secret of *want of power* and constant failure?

The Lord Jesus has not been the first object of the thing undertaken or the word spoken, and then, too, it has lost all value in His eyes. Let us ask, then, are we taken up and occupied with *Himself?* Is there not often but a very partial surrender of the heart to Him, though at the same time there may be much going to and fro in service? What He prizes is a heart thoroughly devoted to Him. He cannot be content with a part of the heart—He wants *the whole.* And, oh, if He cared to shed His blood to win and make them His—all worthless as they are—shall *we* refuse to give them to Him? She surrendered *herself* to be His alone. If He fills the heart of God, is He not worthy and able to fill ours? Christ is the central object of the thoughts of God. When He is of ours, all is in its right place and order. It was so with Paul. He had Christ for the absorbing object of his heart—"To me to live is Christ," and all else was as dross and dung. (Phil. i. 21, and iii. 8.)

But am I saying a word *against* service in all this, beloved? No; but only seeking so to order it that it may be acceptable to the Lord. A heart that with God, makes Christ its paramount object has the spring and power of service indeed; nor will it be found lacking in sympathy with the thoughts of God,

as the Master's words ring in our ears—"Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature." (Mark xvi. 15.) Is it possible that any of us are so far removed from fellowship with God, as not to have the service of seeking to win souls for Christ ever dear to us? Let us work, beloved, while it is day: the night cometh when no man can work. But the most blessed service has its snares. Let us beware lest we should be engaged in telling others of Him, while all the time our hearts are cold to His love. Christ is not *first:* and instead of self-judgment that it is so, and confession, so that communion may be restored, the heart (feeling the distance) runs restlessly into increased measure of service; but this only tends to maintain the distance by cloaking the soul's real condition. Martha found a snare in her very eagerness to get ready the house for the Lord. Mary, occupied with Himself alone, to the exclusion of all other interests, when the time had come, knew how to render the most exquisitely grateful service ever rendered to Him on earth.

And what made it so grateful to the Lord? It sprang from a heart engaged with Himself, and the very least thing thus done, with Him as its object, is pleasing in His sight, if it be but a cup of cold water given to a disciple in His name. Beloved, a solemn day is coming, when all that we have *seemed to do for Christ* will be tested, and the test will be, what place did He occupy in the affections and thoughts of the servant?

Here was where Martha failed, and Mary gained His smile and approval. Her heart filled with Christ, her service was the expression of it, and thus

partook of the character of worship. This ever marks true service. Thus she knew how to do the *right* thing in the *right* place and way, and won those precious words from Jesus, "She hath done what she could: she is come aforehand to anoint my body to the burying."

Nor will He have her disturbed. "Let her alone; why trouble ye her? she hath wrought a good work on me." True, there was not one there who could estimate this service, but He to whom it was done. Judas may account it waste, so may the other disciples; but Mary was in communion with the Lord's mind. He was pleased; it was enough.

Beloved, how humbling ought this false judgment of the disciples to be to us! They would not have counted it waste if it had been done to the poor; they did so account that which sprang from entire devotedness to Christ. This was human nature! And thus it is still. Whom does the world applaud? Those who will spend their time in benevolent and philanthropic schemes, while it counts him a fool who gives up anything for Christ. What is "*waste*" in the world's estimate, because done to Christ, is precious to God. Mary's action was but the *kind* of response He looks for from every one brought to know Him.

But to have a heart thus free to be taken up with Christ there must first be deep settled rest as to every question of sin. The cross of Christ provides for this, for the believer sees not only his *sins* there put away for ever, but *himself*. There is the end of all that *I am*—judged, condemned, crucified with Christ and buried: "There is therefore now no

condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus." (Rom. viii. 1.) Until the work of Christ is thus fully apprehended, self is still before the thoughts to be improved, amended, or got rid of, and it is not to be wondered at that the heart fails to rise to God's thoughts about Christ.

Others again have got beyond this. They have seen the end of themselves in the cross, and rejoice in the knowledge that life, righteousness and acceptance are theirs in the risen Christ. Oh, how blessed it was, beloved, when we first made discovery that He was thus ours, and we were able to sing, as often still—

> "Now I have found a Friend,
> Jesus is mine."

This must have been something of Lazarus' happy experience, as he sat at the table with Jesus. So it was with the bride in the "Song of Songs," when she says, "My beloved is *mine*, and I am his," and thus comforts herself, as well as she may, "until the day break, and the shadows flee away." Observe, the *first* thought is "He is mine." This is her own most blessed interest in Christ; still it is herself that is first. Do not many of us, beloved, get thus far and no further? We rest contented and happy in what we have in Christ, and there is no progress in the knowledge of what *Christ is in Himself*, as God would have it.

But we mark this progress very blessedly in the case before us. Later on in the Song (chap. vi. 3) we find that she can put *His interests first*. *Now*, she says, "I am my beloved's, and my beloved is

mine." The *first* thought is His possession of her, though there is yet room for thoughts of what she possesses. But in chapter vii. 10 we find she has forgotten herself in the far higher thought of His interest in her. She has lost herself in His love, and if she adds aught to "I am my beloved's," it is only to speak again of what she knows of His thoughts, "His desire is towards me." How blessed, beloved, to be able to lose ourselves in the amazing discovery of what we are to Him.

But Mary reaches higher than all this in the knowledge of the Lord Jesus. And shall *we* be satisfied with anything short of what our sister has attained before us? It is blessed to know that He is ours, more blessed still to know the wondrous place He has given us in His heart; but this ought only to lead into a deeper apprehension of Him who so loves us.

This I find also in the experience of the bride in Canticles. For in chapter v. 9, when challenged, "What is thy beloved more than another beloved?" she answers, "He is the chiefest among ten thousand," and then goes on to tell, not of the blessings she has received from Him, nor even of His interest in her, but of all His own varied attractions, until at last she says, "*He is altogether lovely!*"

Thus, beloved, let each of us follow on to know the Lord in the peerless excellency and glory of His person; till we can say, not because she said it, nor because of the report of others, but as the result of our *own experience*, "He *is* the chiefest." It is for this we have been drawn to Him, that *knowing* Him and entering into the perfection of all that He is we

may thus have communion with the Father, who so rests, delights, and finds all His joy in the Son of His love.

There is another notable instance of one who thus had sympathy with the interests of God, and who is therefore distinguished by the Lord's marked approval. In that day of the passing out of the old dispensation, previous to the ushering in of the new, Jerusalem and the temple were *still* the centre of God's thoughts. She of whom I speak knew it; and hence when the house of God needed repair, the poor widow of her want cast her two mites into the treasury; and this was "all that she had, all her living." (Mark xii. 44.)

How beautiful was this entering into God's thoughts! What a surrender of every interest of her own for God's, when, unmindful of her poverty, she gave her little all in the furtherance of God's object.

This again in its place and measure was precious to the Lord. He draws the attention of the disciples to her, for in *His eyes* she had "cast in *more* than *they all.*" What, then, is God's object *now*—shall we not ask? We know it, for He has "made known to us the mystery of his will." Is it not the glory of Christ in His body the church, formed for Him out of the materials of sinners found dead in sins, to be "the fulness of him that filleth all in all"?

If this, then, is the present counsel of God for the glory and joy of the Lord Jesus, does it occupy its proper place in our hearts and service? Are we willing to throw ourselves, our substance, our all, into the line of its accomplishment? To one who has intelligence of it this will be the aim of his

service as surely as it is true. The world will be pleased with what proposes good to man, and will estimate all else as worthless. God will accept that which has the glory of Christ for its object: only then is it of any value with Him. Is not the smile of God's approval enough? One that walks in the consciousness of it can afford to despise alike the frown and flattery of this world. Beloved, let us beware of the world's smile. Its frown were safer by far. We have now "to please but *One*." Let the "She hath done what she could" of Christ be enough for us.

"To me to live is Christ." Let Christ be then the controlling object of our life in the power of the Spirit of God. There is no rest while the heart is divided between Christ and self, or the world, or our friends, or our brethren. The joys of God are entered into by the one that will make Christ, and Christ alone, his object.

Let us then, beloved, be found, like Mary, at the Master's feet. Let us listen to the voice of the Lord Jesus as it is still heard in His word, and as we are thus occupied the Spirit of God will delight to unfold more and more His preciousness to us. It is His office and joy to take of the things of Christ and shew them unto us, until our hearts are won to be His alone.

Alas! do any say, "I have not been entering thus into the preciousness of Christ—my heart is cold to His love and insensible to His grace." Do not dwell on this; your heart will never be warmed by its own coldness. If it is cold I shall never grow warmer by dwelling on the *fact* of the frost and snow around.

Nay, I shall only get colder still, until I draw near to the source of heat. O beloved! is not the source of all light and heat for us *the love of Christ?* Draw near to His own heart. It is the place He gives, and delights that you should take. Lay your head upon His bosom. Your response to His love may be feeble, but His is not measured by ours. He does not change; the *measure* of His love to *each* is the Father's to Him. Did John call himself the disciple whom Jesus loved? Yes; but it was only that by faith he *took the place* Jesus had given to the rest as well as to him—the very place He wants *you* to take, as though His love belonged to nobody else besides. Such love must melt the very coldest heart that *believes* it. Then Christ will naturally be first in every thought. He will be the absorbing object of the mind. Thus it was with Mary; and this was why her service was so grateful to Jesus. It sprang from a heart that was engaged with Him in the knowledge she had gained of His own intrinsic excellency. It was of the *order of result* that God looks for in causing the gospel to be proclaimed; and hence, "Wheresoever this gospel shall be preached throughout the whole world, this also that she hath done shall be spoken of for a memorial of her." Soon, beloved, we shall see Him face to face. Then shall we know as we are known. There will be no power then that could any more divide our affections with Him. Service will have no snares then, for God's object will be the *only* object of every heart *there*.

Let us seek that it may be so with each of us *here*. The Lord grant it!

"HIS OWN WHICH WERE IN THE WORLD."

(JOHN XIII.)

IT is helpful to the true understanding of the blessed instruction of the Lord Jesus before us to note the place it holds in this gospel. We can all see that it is very marked. Chapter x. gives us the result of the testimony of the words and works of Jesus in the nation. Responsible long since to receive Him as the Christ, they only waited for the full revelation of the glory of His person, as one with the Father (ver. 30), to take up stones to stone Him. How infinite the grace that had brought the Son of God within their reach! This was their estimate of it! "Say ye of him, whom the Father hath sanctified, and sent into the world, Thou blasphemest; because I said, I am the Son of God?" Chapters xi. and xii. bring out for us His glories as Son of God (ver. 4), King of Israel (chap. xii. 13), and the Son of man (Ver. 23, 24.) Blessed answer of God to the stone-throwing of the rabble on earth! But the nation's rejection of Him is the nation's judgment. He had been presented to them in the grace of Isaiah liii., and they had seen no beauty in Him that they should desire Him; and now God has judicially closed those blind eyes that they could not see, according to Isaiah vi. Judgment having been thus pronounced upon the rejecters of His testimony, Jesus turns His back upon a cold,

heartless world to shut Himself in with the little company of His own whom He has been given out of it.

From chapter xiii. on to the end of chaper xvii. we find Him alone with His disciples, free to make known to them the full depth of the place they had in His love, now that He was about to leave them and go back to the Father, and how that love would be in exercise for them. This is what makes these chapters so peculiarly precious to us, beloved; for we have all our part in what is unfolded in them as surely as we are His.

Mark the opening words of the Holy Ghost, for they are the key to all that follows. They give us the new position of things on which depends the action of Jesus in this chapter for its full significance. "Jesus knew that his hour was come that he should *depart out of this world* unto the Father"—such is the place *He* now takes anticipatively—"having loved *his own which were in the world*, he loved them unto the end." He is gone to the Father; we are left in the world without Him! How dreadful to have to return to the scene out of which He has been rejected; to pursue our path through it alone?—to be forgotten? Oh, no! But to be to Him what our hearts could never have conceived. Listen! He calls us "*His own!*" Far more than if He had said—"His own friends," or even "His brethren!" "His own" speaks volumes to us.

The human heart has a peculiar joy in having something it can call its own. It is not so much the value of what is possessed, as the simple consciousness that it is mine. Now it is just thus that Jesus speaks

of us. He tells me that I am His, and that *He* delights in its being so. He would not occupy us with ourselves, nor with our poor, feeble estimate of Him. He would have us lose ourselves at last, and lose ourselves in *His thoughts* about us.

Are you prepared for this, beloved—prepared for divine love, speaking and acting from its spring which is wholly in itself, without a question of what you are being raised from first to last? Oh, this is rest! He knew you, and *yet* He *loved* you. He died, not merely in pity and compassion that would save you from hell, but in love that had set itself on you as its object, and now He calls you "His own," as well He may. We are His by more than all that by which one ever belonged to another, and it is ours simply to own it. Do you stand overwhelmed in presence of such love? It is well; you will never look again to find the reason of it in yourself; but be content that the only reason for it should be found deep in that love itself.

But listen—"He loved them unto the end." Do you ask to the end of what? To the end of our path in the world, till we shall need the assurance of it no more. But what an assurance for our heart! He knows my path through to the end. He knows the failure that marks every step of it, the oftentimes coldness and faithlessness and treachery of my heart, and *yet* He loves me to the end! Was ever love tried like His? And oh, how it stands the heaviest strain put upon it! What a strain that was that was to be put upon it that very night, known before to Him too (ver. 38), and yet *Peter* was by, to hear the blessed words and know his part in a love

that could never change. Now it is because we have so deep a place in His love that He delights to have us near to Himself in the enjoyment of it. True, it is *our* joy to be there; but that is nothing to His joy in having us there. He died that we might know and take our place there, and now He lives to secure and maintain us in unhindered enjoyment of it. He will not easily give up what He has acquired for Himself at so infinite a cost. "His own" is still the spring of the service He enters upon in this chapter—the object of it, to secure our hearts for Himself while He is away. The love of Christ delights to be in exercise about its objects; but *He* has an interest in it as well as we.

Verse 2 stands in terrible contrast with all that we have been considering. But the heartless treachery of one that has been the companion of Jesus, but who never believed on Him (chap. vi. 64), will not deter the grace of Jesus from the service that alone could meet the need of those whom He is about to leave in the world.

Verse 3. "Jesus knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he was come from God, and went to God." The time has not come yet for His taking possession of the "all things" that have been given into His hands; but He rises to secure that which is more precious to Him than all beside—uninterrupted and unrivalled possession of our hearts, against all that would dispute it with Him.

Verse 4. "He rises from supper, and laid aside his garments; and took a towel, and girded himself. After that he poureth water into a basin, and began

to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel wherewith he was girded." The action of the Lord here is eminently symbolic, beloved brethren. To gather merely from it the lesson of humility is, I do not hesitate to say, to miss the point of the instruction. We see that it must have a deeper character by reading from verse 7 to verse 10. It is essential to having part with Christ. It is, in fact, the Lord's present service in the Father's presence for His people in this world.

Water is the well-known symbol of the Word of God applied by the Spirit. Here we find a double application of it, the force of which is much obscured in our translation, but which you will understand better if you read, observing a distinction of the Spirit of God, "He that is *bathed* needeth not save to *wash* his feet, but is clean every whit." What, then, is the first application of the water of the Word that needs never to be repeated? It is that spoken of in John iii. 5, "Except a man be *born of water* and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." It is the word of God brought home by the Spirit to the conscience in that moment when first we rested on a word from God for our salvation. Thus were we "born of God," "begotten of the incorruptible seed of the word," and made "partakers of the divine nature." All previous remedial measures have but revealed more fully the extent of man's ruin. But now, what man could never do—that is, cleanse himself—God has done by His Word received into the soul. We are clean in His sight—aye, clean every whit. Sins, and the nature of sin within us, have received their doom in the death of Him in whom we

have believed, and we have received His life beyond the reach of judgment and death. Meanwhile we are found in a sin-polluted world. *One* only ever passed through it without contamination.

Temptation abounds on every side and finds too ready an answer in the flesh within us. Just as the feet contract uncleanness in a dirty path, so are our consciences liable to contract defilement at every moment as we pass through the world. Sin never again can come *upon* us for judgment and wrath; but it can and must necessarily, if allowed, cloud enjoyment of the love of Jesus, break up communion and put us in a place of practical distance from Him. This is what *He* cannot bear. We must remember that there is nothing that the eye can rest on or the imagination be occupied with in the things of nature that has not this tendency. For all that is in the world is not of the Father, and all that is of the flesh—of the nature and life of the first Adam—is that that God has had to exterminate in judgment for the believer in the cross of Christ.

How great and real, then, is our need, beloved, and how sweetly the love of Jesus engages Him for us in the very service suited to it! For this is what is symbolised in the washing of the feet. It is the second application of the Word given us in verse 10. We find it again in Ephesians v. 26, "Christ loved the church, and gave himself for it, *that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word*, that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing." If, then, we are to have part with Jesus, He must apply the water of the Word to

detach us from all that would hinder communion with Himself. Note well, that it is not something He leaves *us* to do, or it would never be done. It is, "If *I* wash thee not, thou hast no part with me."

I think we do not well to confine the service of the Lord as symbolised here to the restoration of communion *when it has been broken.* Assuredly there is this; but there is more besides—even all that is needed to maintain us in even, uninterrupted enjoyment of His presence. For the Word of God, as applied to us by the Lord, judges all that is incompatible with this, and thus marks off for us a clean path, separated from the defilement round us, where the Lord Himself can be with us. This is His object in the ministry of the Word, beloved. And do we not bless Him for it? What more is wanted for the fulness of joy?

But then, are we prepared to submit ourselves to the Lord Jesus that He may wash our feet? Ah, this is a question for our consciences! The Word being the Revelation of Christ to us must *unsparingly* judge all that is unlike Himself. Christ is the only measure of its judgment. O beloved, is there a single thing you would *like* it to spare? Search out and see if you are yielding yourselves honestly to the Word's searching action upon heart and conscience. Think of the terrible cost at which you reserve aught that it would judge—even of forfeiting fellowship with Him! And what have you *gained* with the loss of this? Where can the heart find aught to satisfy it away from Him? True, *He* will never rest for the love He bears you till He has led you back to His side; but oh, how grievous and terrible a thing is the

defilement of sin! None but the Son of God could undo its effect, and it needs that *He* should stoop to wash your feet. "If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me." But the action of the Word of God is not simply negative in judging and leading us to judge the evil. Nay, it is this, just because it is the full, positive revelation of Christ Himself to us. Thus, by all He teaches us—slowly, it may be, because of our sluggish hearts, but surely—He is leading us with wondrous patience and grace into a deeper knowledge of Himself. And there is an irresistible power in the knowledge of Christ to attach to Himself and so to detach us from all that is not Christ. Is it that He would *tear* you away from all your little interests and leave you but an empty void? No, no; far from it. He knows that *nothing can fill* your heart but Himself; therefore He brings you to judge with Him all that would create or maintain a cloud between you and Him: and He does it in His own sweet way. He does it by the revelation of what *He is in Himself* to us until our hearts become taken up with Him as their object. Then easily, and without room for regret, we drop what only enfeebled for us the power of heaven's richest joy. For if the effect of every truth when duly received is separation from the things of the flesh and the world, it is only separating to still closer fellowship with the Lord Jesus: and this is at once precious to Him and *necessary* to us now that we have tasted of its joy.

Alas! I fear that too often, like Peter, we resist the wholesome water of the Word; and more culpably than he. He might have pleaded ignorance of the intention of Christ; but not so we. We know now

that He would only form us by it for deeper intimacy with Himself for we are His own; but we love too well something that He must detach us from. And yet it is Jesus stoops to wash you! My brother, my sister, can you say to *Him*, "Thou shalt never wash my feet"? But we virtually say this if we are afraid of the truth, and seek to turn away its edge from us and our ways. Thus it is that the clouds come—we refuse the word of the Son of God, and the conscience becomes defiled by what it would have purged us from.

Peter refused it, for he had yet to learn his need of the Lord's loving service. Confidence in the flesh was the root of it in him, as in many another of us since. How soon and terribly he made experience of it—but, may we not also say, of the Lord's restoring grace? He who had said, "I will lay down my life for thy sake," that very night, with cursings and oaths, denied that he ever knew Him. "And the Lord turned and looked upon Peter." What a look that was for Peter! No wonder it broke his heart, for it told him that Jesus loved him still: he might change to Jesus, but Jesus never to him. I have little doubt that look was enough to assure Peter that he was forgiven; but this was not enough for the Lord. There was yet sad effects of his fall remaining. The communion of Peter with the Lord had been broken. A heavy cloud still hung over him. What a witness of this was—"I go a fishing." (Chap. xxi. 3.) He had once counted all this loss for Christ, but that was when his heart was filled with Christ. Ah, he had denied Him now, and the poor heart of Peter sought in vain to fill up the void that was

there by resuming his old occupations; but I am sure it was listless, wretched work. Which of us have not known something of such terrible experience?

And all this shews us that forgiveness is one thing, communion with Christ, as the object that fills our hearts, quite another. Beloved, have you learned to apprehend the solemn difference? Many of us have got all we could from Christ, and gone away to walk at an even distance from Him in the world and its interests; others of us have tasted of the joy of walking with Him, and if the cloud has intervened—never, never can *rest* be found until it is broken up. And *Jesus* never can rest until it is broken up. Mark His ways of love with Peter. "What I do thou knowest not now" Jesus had said (chap. xiii. 7), "but thou shalt know hereafter." And the time had come when Peter should know, in the reality of its blessing, the action of the washing of the Word, and welcome the love of Jesus that stooped to do it. For, get on and prosper as Peter might at his fishing, the Lord Jesus could not bear the distance that had come between them. But restoration is no light work. The conscience must be probed, and the root of failure laid bare. "Lovest thou me *more than do these*" will do its own work. It will bring to mind the boast, "Though all shall be offended because of thee, yet will I never be offended;" and then, that his was the deepest fall of all. Sad, painful experience, but needed, that he should know himself. Painful work, too, to have it opened up again in presence of the Lord and of all, but to result in the full judgment of the evil that had been at work, that not a cloud might remain upon his joy. "Simon,

son of Jonas, lovest thou me?" three times repeated as he had three times denied the Lord, draws out his heart to confide in Him as he could not in another on earth—John only knew that he had sworn that he never knew Him—"*Thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I love thee.*" The Lord Jesus answers by confiding to him His most precious interests on earth, "Feed my sheep."

What perfect grace, beloved, are these ways of our Lord, as each of us have proved them for ourselves! The heart has been heavy because of distance from Christ. Some little word from the Lord has been borne to the mind. It just meets the need. You say how strange that the word so suited at the moment should have come to mind! Ah, beloved, it was the Lord Jesus that stooped thus to wash your feet, and you discerned not that it was He! But how terrible the character of failure and backsliding and sin when judged in the light of such grace! The Lord grant deep subjection of heart to His word, that we may be kept from so sorely trying His love! But the cloud is dispelled—Peter's heart has been restored to its rest in fellowship with Christ, and the Lord can give him in the power of this the path he had sought to take in the energy of the flesh, and in which he had so utterly broken down. It was His own path-way of death, which is all that He can give any of us here. (Compare verses 36, 37, with chapters xii. 24–26 and xxi. 18, 19.)

Yes, beloved, the path of the Lord Jesus in this world can only be taken in the power of communion with Him. Therefore it is, as it seems to me, that the Lord's precious provision for the maintenance of

this while He is away precedes all the other instruction of His farewell words to us. John's place on the bosom of Jesus (ver. 23) is the place He would maintain us in the enjoyment of (with a somewhat deeper experience of the love of it), by the service of the first part of the chapter. But you may say, "Surely that place alone belonged to John, as *par excellence* the disciple whom Jesus loved." You wrong Christ's love by such thoughts as these, beloved. Partiality is a defect of human love. There is none in divine love. It has the one measure of love for each of us, and for all. "As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you." There is no room for degrees here, for the love for each is infinite and cannot be exceeded. Truly it passeth knowledge. Besides, if He loves one more than another, it is to say that He has found something *in that one* to love. Whereas there was nothing in any of us to draw forth His love. Human love is called forth by something worthy of love in its object; but this is the bright distinguishing characteristic of divine love, that its objects are alike unworthy. The source of Jesus' love is in itself—deep, deep in the secrets of His own heart. It would be terrible indeed if, after all, you would insist on the place of distance. Will you not accredit His love by taking the near place He gives you? It is all He has left you to do! Love is gratified by having its object near to itself. It delights in the confidence it has begotten, that will quietly take the place of nearness—nor fear that it should be counted intrusion. This is the response His love looks for from us. John knew it, and leaned upon His bosom, and writes himself down

"the disciple whom Jesus loved!" It is but the style and signature of faith, that makes nothing of self, but everything of the love of Christ, excluding all human merit and worthiness. Peter is in comparative distance, just because so much of *self* still adhered to him.

Communion is, moreover, the spring of all intelligence of the mind of the Lord, now revealed to us in His Word. Peter has to inquire of it through John. John "leaned" upon His bosom before; he has only to "lie" the closer now. (Ver. 25.) Perhaps some may object that none can be so near to Jesus now that He has gone to the Father as they could who were with Him on earth. Not so, beloved; the Holy Ghost has been given us since then according to the promise of Jesus (chap. xiv. 16, 20), that we may be brought into a far higher order of intimacy with Him than *could* have been theirs: and it is just the object of the service of the Lord Jesus in this chapter that we have been considering to maintain us in this—that not a cloud of *moral distance* might come in between us.

I can only note further, that the Lord Jesus commits to us a very sweet participation in this His service for us. (Vers. 14, 15.) "If I then, *your* Lord and Master, have washed your feet: ye also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you." Again He gives His new commandment in verse 34: "*As* I have loved you, that ye also love one another." If *His* love is the only *measure* of the love we are to bear to one another, He also sets us an example of the *manner* in which it will be in exercise. And this

is solemnly important in these last days, beloved. Which of us has not witnessed with joy a drawing together of the hearts of the children of God in our common faith and blessing, such as has not been, so generally, perhaps, since Satan first sowed seeds of division in the assembly of God on earth? Old barriers of creed and ancestral religion have not been able to stand against the desire that the people of God should be together. The danger is lest Satan should prevail to mar this precious fruit of God's working among us, by intermingling the common social principle of nature, with the love to which Christ commands His people. True love has Christ for its first object, and takes in all that are His, to love, as He loved us; and it will be above all essential to it to seek to secure *the joy of Christ in His people.* Thus, if you *truly* love me, my brother, and discover in my ways or associations aught that would tend to keep me at a distance from Christ, being contrary to truth and holiness, you will never rest until you have stooped to wash me, by the ministry of some word of Christ, from the moral stain. You will have learned in sweet experience of the ways of Christ, the grace so needed for this expression of your love; and you will not be deterred by the pride that may spurn your interference, till you have led me into my place of privilege and joy. That which would consent to our each doing our own will, irrespective of Christ's, under the plea of love, has lost every characteristic of *christian* love.

The Lord give us, beloved, to rise more into His thoughts and desires about us. Oh, to enter into the depths of that term His love has fixed upon us, "*His*

own!" What a rebuke to every thought that is not according to His mind! What a corrective of every tendency of things, within and around, to draw us from Him! Nowhere can rest or joy for us be found now, save in the unclouded enjoyment of nearness to and intimacy with Christ.

"LET NOT YOUR HEART BE TROUBLED."

(JOHN XIV.)

IT is of importance that we should note the cause of the sorrow to which the Lord Jesus addresses Himself in these precious words for the comfort of the troubled ones; for, as I am persuaded, they will lose their deepest significance and blessing for any who have not known as *their own* the sorrow that is the occasion of them. For it is no ordinary sorrow that is here, such as abounds for every child of God in his path through this evil world. It is not any and every sorrow that here finds itself in the presence of the Lord for sympathy, whose heart has still upon the throne of God its kindred throb for every throb of ours, and comfort, too, to the full; but the very special sorrow of any who *know Jesus well enough to miss Him* in a scene out of which He has been cast by the unanimous consent of man. Brighter and more blessed things, it is true, have resulted to us from the cross of Christ, in the wondrous grace of God, that could make this culminating point of man's hatred the moment and place of the brightest display of that grace. But this does not lessen the guilt of the world in putting Him there, nor the sense of His rejection by it in our hearts as we pass through it. And so it is that Paul can say, "By the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ the world is crucified unto me and I unto the world." Beloved, let us put it to our

heart, do we *miss Him?* We have known His work for salvation, but have we gone on to know *Himself* for love? Has His work, with all its known results in our blessing, served in any feeble measure to attach us to Him who has accomplished it, and we do not miss Him in this world? Impossible that it should be so! For us, as for Mary, if *He* is gone, then all is gone that was of any value for our hearts here; and henceforth, in all this world's scene, there is a blank that nothing can fill. It is stained with the blood of our murdered Lord; His cross blights it in our eyes; our hearts can never dissociate the world from His *cross* that judged it, and we only live to shew forth His death in it, while as strangers and pilgrims we pass on to our home above. Beloved, do our hearts know enough of the Lord Jesus to be desolate in a place where He is not? Ah, then, we know the disciples' sorrow, and to us as well as to them belongs the comfort of the words of Jesus.

And see how He counts upon the disciples' love and consequent sorrow; for He has no sooner broken it to them in gentle words, that only "yet a little while" (chap. xiii. 33) He can be with them, than He adds, "Let not your heart be troubled." Precious fruit of His own love, that wherever it is known detaches hearts from the world without Him by attaching them to Himself. Yes, He whom they had known, and loved, and followed on earth in such precious intimacy, was about to return to the Father, and they would now no longer know Him after the flesh; yet He was only going to take the same place as the unseen God, where He would be still known by faith, "Ye believe in God, believe also in me,"

and in all the *deeper revelations* of the glory of His Person that would result from that place; so that He will even prove that it is *expedient* for them that He goes away. And as we shall see, these deeper revelations of Himself will form the very staple of the comfort ministered to us in His words. Where else could comfort be found for hearts that have known Him ever so feebly? All joy is treasured up for us in the knowledge of Christ. There can be no *different* joy, but only *deeper measures* of the same joy; and this is just what He brings us into by going away.

But will He enter alone into His joy, and *leave* us in our wilderness desolation? No; He only goes to prepare a place for us there too, and to wait for the moment when He can come and fetch us into it. Beloved, He speaks to us of *home;* and if you say it is of His home, I answer, not more His than yours with Him now: for He has never left us, until He has accomplished a work in the world, on the ground of which He has introduced us into the very same relationship that He Himself, as man, stands in to God. "Go to my brethren," says He, from the mouth of the open and empty sepulchre, "and say unto them, I ascend to my Father and your Father, and to my God and your God." (Chap. xx. 17.) Henceforth His Father is our Father, His God our God, His home our home. And if there are in it "many mansions," His love has already set apart the place for each individual object of it: for such I take to be the force of the words, "I go to prepare a place for you." None but *the one* for whom each place has been prepared by Jesus can *fill* it for *His* heart. How precious to be still and ever

the objects of such love! Now, in His absence, we need the *assurance* of it, and He gives it to us.

But observe well *where* it is He gives us our home, "In my Father's house." Oh, beloved, have our hearts entered into the blessedness of this? The Jewish hopes of the disciples were filled with the displayed glory of the kingdom, as was natural from prophecy; but the time for that display, depending as it did upon the presence of the Messiah, was not come yet, as was evident from Jesus' words, "Yet a *little* while I am with you." And when all seemed lost to their disappointed expectations in His going away, He unfolds to their faith what prophecy never thought of, *the Father's house*, and gives them and us our home there, in a love that is beyond all the glory; for the glory can be *displayed*, the love, never. What rich comfort for our hearts, troubled in this world at the absence of Jesus!

But there is more, and more there must be, to meet the *necessities* of those to whom, by these very revelations, the Lord Jesus is becoming more precious every day. Is this separation to last for ever? No; *He* could not bear it any more than we. And, coupled with the home presented to our faith to enjoy, He gives us just what He knows hearts that truly love Him could not do without—the promise (ver. 3), "I will come again, and receive you *unto myself;*" precious hope for us, beloved, till hope shall be lost in the consummation of it, and we shall see Him face to face. Nor is it only that we shall be with Him—for, "to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord," and thus in death we go to

Him—but His word is, "*I* will *come again*, and receive you unto myself," and the promise is as sure to-day for our hearts as when He first gave it to us.* Beloved brethren, is the coming of our Lord more than a doctrine among us? Is it a deep spring of joy even in hope? Is it a living power in our souls? But the promise goes on, "that where I am, there ye may be also;" and this tells us that the necessity of our hearts is His own, that, not for our joy only but for His, we must be where He is. And, beloved, that is the heaven of the Christian's hope. Man's imagination has pictured a heaven of its own, well suited to it, no doubt, but not the least suited to the desires of Christ for us. Scripture has but little about heaven; for all desire, all joy, all hope, is summed up for any who know *Christ* ever so feebly, in that "where *I* am" of His. *His presence* is the very heaven of heaven to us.

Yet we are only approaching the kernel of joy for us, and comfort, while we wait, in the absence of the Lord Jesus, for the fulfilment of such bright hopes. And this is contained in what follows—ushered in by the words (ver. 4), "and whither I go ye know, and the way ye know." He was going to the Father, of whom on earth He had been personally the full revelation before their eyes: "No man hath seen God at any time; the only-begotten Son, who *is* in the bosom of the *Father*, he hath declared him." (Chap. i. 18.) So then they knew where He was going, and the way, in the very revelation that *He*

* His coming for us, I need hardly say, is not the same as our going to Him.

was of the Father (ver. 6), "*I* am the way." He is "the truth" also, consequent as truth is on the revelation of God: for the truth about anything is its relation to God, which can only be known as God is known. Thus it was that when the Lord Jesus came into the world, all was tested and revealed in its true character. Then it was known that all that is of this world was one vast gigantic lie! Jesus alone, the truth, who thus testing and judging it, was rejected by it. "Men loved darkness rather than light." But He is also "the life:" for, if any found in Jesus the full disclosure of their lost condition by nature, they found also in Him the full revelation of God in grace and truth, and "this is eternal life *to know thee* the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent." (Chap. xvii. 3.)

Moreover, if God is known *in the Son*, He is known in the character of this relation—or, in other words, as Father: "If ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also." (Ver. 7.) And this is truly blessed. He died "to bring us to God;" but having come by Jesus, the only way, we find that it is to the Father He has brought us. Thus, we not only know our future place in His Father's house, but we know His Father, and we know Him as *our* Father. And this is needed to complete the consciousness that our home is there. Well may Philip say (ver. 8), "Lord, shew us the Father, and it *sufficeth* us." What joy could go beyond the knowledge of the Father? But then Philip ought to have known the Father as manifested in the Son: "Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known ME, Philip? *He that hath seen me hath seen the Father;*" and

"from henceforth," says Jesus, "ye know him, and have seen him." (Ver. 9.)

This, beloved, is our portion of blessing in our Lord's absence. The disciples enjoyed the presence of the Lord Jesus amongst them. In another day the Son of man will come in His glory, and the blessing of the earth in the kingdom will depend upon the manifestation of His glory. But oh, beloved, far beyond all in the richness of blessing is the way in which He is revealed to our faith *now*, as hid in God. Lost to the outward eye, it is only that He has taken His place according to the intimate nearness of His relationship with the Father; and in this wondrous intimacy we are given to know Him (ver. 11): "Believe me that I am in the Father, and the Father in me." What is the displayed glory of the kingdom compared with the home circle of divine relationship and love, into which such words introduce us? And this is our blessing. Power to grasp the full blessedness of such a revelation is another thing, and we are not left without this also, as we shall see. But such is the revelation, which is the strength of our comfort in the absence of Christ. He is not lost to us, blessed be God! but revealed to us all the more fully from the place He has taken in His oneness with the Father, so that we know Him in the Father, and the Father in Him, and "our *fellowship* is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ." Surely this is privilege beyond all that was ever heard of before in the wondrous dealings of God in grace with His people—beyond all that will be enjoyed by Jew or Gentile, blessed in the millennium in the personal presence and manifested glory of the Messiah; nay,

beloved, privilege that *depends* upon the very place that the *absent* One has taken with God, having first fully declared Him in the world. Oh, for hearts duly to estimate it, and to take our place accordingly, in the sweet and precious fellowship with the Father and the Son, to which we are now consciously and intelligently brought as our privilege and joy. Well may the Holy Spirit say, instructing us in these very things (1 John 3, 4), "These things write we unto you, that your joy may be *full*."

Having said this much, beloved brethren, as to the *character* of our blessing in the absence of the Lord Jesus, I pass over intervening verses, however important in their connection, to note next the *power* by which alone we can enjoy such a revelation of God. This is promised us in verse 16, "I will pray the Father, and he will give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; even the Spirit of truth. . . . At that day (namely, when He is come) ye shall know that I am in the Father." Thus has the Holy Spirit been given to dwell within each of us, that by His power we may grasp the present revelation of the Son in the Father—the power by which, though still in the circumstances of the wilderness, we may ever walk above them in full, unclouded fellowship with the Father and the Son. But more than this is known now that the Spirit has come; for verse 20 goes on to unfold to us (oh, amazing blessedness!) that we are *associated with the Lord Jesus* in all the nearness and intimacy of His place in the Father. "At that day ye shall know that I am in the Father, and *ye in me*, and I in you." Beloved, can anything be added to such blessedness? The

whole of our position here lies before us. While Jesus is withdrawn from the eye of the world that cast Him out, soon to come back again for the display of His power and glory in the kingdom, the Holy Spirit has come down, sent from the very place the absent One has taken *in the Father*, to be the power by which our souls are brought into the divine intimacy and fellowship of such a place, and of our association with the Son in all the wondrous blessedness of it.

But it will be easily seen that if our blessing is only to be fully enjoyed by the power of the Spirit of God, it is above all things essential to such enjoyment that nothing should be allowed to grieve Him in our walk. Hence it is that verse 15 occupies the place it does in this instruction: "If ye love me, keep my commandments." Nothing grieves the Spirit more than when self-will is allowed to work. Obedience is the very opposite to this. Here, then, comes the third point in the Lord's instruction, as He tells us of *the path and order*, in which alone the joy of these wondrous links with heaven and with God can be entered into and maintained. How blessedly the power of an ungrieved Spirit was illustrated for us in the cloudless joy of the desolate path of Jesus on the earth! And the secret of it is unfolded to us in His words, "I have meat to eat that ye know not of. . . . My meat is *to do the will* of him that sent me." (Chap. iv. 32–34.) Thus it is only as every thought of our hearts is brought into captivity to the obedience of Christ, that our portion of divine intimacy can be enjoyed by the power of the Spirit. And this is a joy absolutely apart from and independent of all earthly

circumstances; it springs from the links that connect our hearts with the Father's presence and the place that the Lord Jesus has taken in the interval of His rejection by the earth. Oh, that nothing may be tolerated for a moment that would enfeeble the power of such associations in our souls!

But the happy spring of this obedience is found in the words of the Lord Jesus, "If ye love me." It is as though He said, Dry up your tears at the thought of My leaving you—albeit these tears are precious in His sight—and prove your love, if it is true and real, by the more practical path of My obedience. And when the heart is taken up with Christ as its object, how easy and natural obedience to His commandments becomes! "He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me." (Ver. 21.) But if Christ is not our simple and all-controlling object, there is nothing that is more distasteful than this obedience. Ah, such is the treachery of these hearts of ours that we would be serving with unwearied zeal, according to *our own thoughts* of what He would like, throwing every energy, every power, into such service, rather than yield Him the unreserved obedience that is for this very reason the *test* of true love. Not that I would depreciate service in its own place, beloved brethren; but true service to Christ is rendered in the path of *obedience*, or else it will want, as Martha's did, that which would make it most sweet and acceptable to Him. As the loving eye of the Lord Jesus rests upon each one of His in the earth, it is not they who seem the busiest and most active and zealous for Him who most meet His approval, for this suits too well oftentimes the rest-

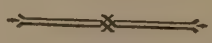
lessness and pride of nature; but the quiet, unobtrusive walk of one little noticed, it may be, by men, but governed in every detail of it by the commandments of Christ: "he it is that loveth me." And love for Him thus manifesting itself becomes, as it were, a fresh bond between us and the Father, for Jesus is the object of the Father's love, and thus we are found to have an object of love in common with the Father. We know what bonds are formed between hearts by some common object of love: "He that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him." It is not that there is any difference in the love wherewith all of us are loved: for, as to the Father's love, we are each accepted "*in the Beloved*," and the world shall know in another day that "thou hast loved them as thou hast loved me" (chap. xvii. 23), and if we would know the only measure of the love of Jesus for *any* of us, He gives it us in chapter xv. 9, "*As* the Father hath loved me, *so* have I loved you." But the *obedient one* only can *enjoy* this love, which yet knows no change. The disobedient child misses all the caressings of love, albeit he is not loved the less. But more, "I will *manifest* myself unto him." Does the Lord call us by His obedience to a path that few have courage for—there, it may be, to walk alone? Not alone, beloved, for He is with us in it; and will any heart that knows the Lord dare to say that it will be lonely then? To yield up my own will at His command may bring upon me the frown of all; but if I know the smile and approval of Jesus, is it not enough? Are we listening for the voice of the Lord to take us, according to His promise to us

in verse 3, to be where He is, and is His presence to us the deepest joy of heaven? What shall we say of these manifestations of Himself to any who will but obey Him? It is heaven's deepest joy in character brought down to my heart below!

But would you ask with Judas (not Iscariot) what this private manifestation of Himself to one, and not to another, means—so foreign as such a thought was to Jewish expectations, that waited upon the public manifestation of the Messiah to all, and how it is to be enjoyed while He is hidden to the eye of sense? Then you must learn the meaning of the Lord's answer (ver. 23), "If a man love me, he will keep *my words*." This is more, beloved, than keeping the commandments of Jesus. Obedience to His expressed commands leads me into a place of ever-deepening intimacy with Himself. To this place of deeper intimacy belong His "words." I do not *command* my intimate friend; my mind is expressed in my words, and he knows my mind and acts accordingly, by the very intimacy and fellowship he enjoys. A little word has ten thousand times greater weight with him than my command has upon one at a distance. The servant gets his commands and obeys them, but "he knoweth not what his lord doeth;" my friend walks with me in intelligence of my deepest thoughts. Oh, beloved, are we walking in this intimacy with Him who has not called us "servants," but "friends;" and, hanging upon the precious words of His lips, are we getting into deeper intelligence of His mind? How often, when at a distance, we find our excuse for doing our own will, in that we have no express *command* from the Lord

Jesus! Oh, that every little word of His may have its irresistible sway over us! This, again, is the expression of truest love, and what an answer it receives! Is it joy to us to think of being received to the Lord Jesus just now in the mansions of the Father's house? But the promise in verse 23 brings the Father and the Son down to make their "mansions" (for the word is the same) in the path with any who only thus love the Lord.

Beloved, I can say no more. What more could be given to encourage and sustain the heart in faithfulness to our absent Lord? Has God resources beyond what are here revealed for our joy? Oh, to be filled with the Spirit, that we may comprehend the full blessedness of our portion and have capacity to enjoy it! Well, well may He say (ver. 18), "I will not leave you comfortless," when He only goes away to reveal Himself from His place in the Father's presence, in oneness with the Father, in the full brightness and joy for our hearts of *all that He is*, even while we tread the path of this dark world. "I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you," and so faith enjoys His presence still, and knows Him in the Father as it never could have known Him while He was in the world, by the power of the Holy Spirit given to us, and all that is wanting to the full consummation of our joy is to see Him face to face, and be like Him and with Him for ever.



"THE MEN WHICH THOU GAVEST ME."

(JOHN XVII.)

BEFORE calling your attention, beloved brethren, to a few things in this unparalleled scripture, I desire to cast a glance over what has preceded it, as to the general character of the instruction from chapter xiii.

The scenes of chapters xiii. and xiv. are still laid in the house where the Lord supped with His disciples in the beginning of chapter xiii. At the end of chapter xiv. He says, "Arise, let us go hence"; and chapters xv. and xvi. were spoken while the Lord was in the public way to Gethsemane, for we find that they had not yet crossed the brook Cedron at the beginning of chapter xviii. Now these circumstances leave their impress upon the instruction, for in chapters xiii. and xiv. we are occupied with the home scenes of the Father's house and the intimacies of divine fellowship into which we are brought by the power of the Holy Ghost now that Jesus is gone away, while we are also given most blessedly His service from the place where He is, by the ministry of the word, to maintain us in this heavenly communion—judging all that would tend to hinder it, for His joy and ours.

Then, and not till then, does He lead us out into the public scenes of our place in the world for fruit-bearing, discipleship, service and testimony, as in chapters xv. and xvi. Our hearts must first be at perfect rest in the grace that has set us in the

presence of God and in heavenly fellowship with the Father and Son before we are called into or have any power for these solemn responsibilities of our path in the earth. This is ever God's order, and we shall find it most fully maintained in the chapter before us—the last of this wonderful series.

Much has come out in these chapters of love that passeth knowledge—enough, we may well say, to assure us of an ever-present interest in it—but there is much in the heart of the Lord Jesus that has not found expression as yet. No human words can convey to that little circle round Him what they are to Him. One heart only can fully enter into it. It is the Father's. To Him He lifts His eyes (ver. 1) and pours into His ear what had long pressed for utterance, but found no possibility of it *for us*. But we, beloved, are admitted to draw near and have intelligence of what passes in the intimacy of communion between the Son and the Father and to find ourselves the subjects of it all! It is not God addressing His children as often in scripture, nor the revelation before our eyes of God in Christ, as we have had it generally in the gospels; but it is the Son speaking to the Father—free at last to express all that is in His heart, but in our hearing, so that we may know, as far as we *can* know, what is deepest there. Do our hearts rise to the sense of such amazing privilege?

"The hour is come." What hour is that that must be singled out of eternity as *the hour* of the existence of the Son of God, that ever and anon has seemed to cast its dark shadow across His path on earth? Twice in this gospel we have heard that no

man could lay hands on Him, "for his hour was not yet come." He, too, has spoken of it—"Now is my soul troubled; and what shall I say; Father, save me from this hour: but," as though he *would* not say it, "for this cause came I unto this hour." But, strangely intermingling with the sorrow we find anticipations of brighter things connected with it, "The hour is come that the Son of man should be glorified." For both sorrow, and joy, and glory, that was indeed "the hour," the like of which there never has been, nor can be again.

"The hour is come"—the hour of the cross of Christ—and now in this chapter He takes His place as having passed through it—"I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do." A man has walked upon earth before God, the object of God's perfect delight, the only One that ever perfectly answered to His mind as to what man ought to be, over whom the heavens have opened for the first time and the voice of God has declared, "Thou art my beloved Son: in thee I am well pleased." But more than this, He has been before man the perfect expression of God in all His infinite grace, God manifest in the flesh, as God had longed to make Himself known. Still much more was needed if the glory of God was to be made good in a world of sinners. Sin was there. And the holiness and righteousness of God must be declared as to sin in the only way they could be, and that was by its judgment.

All, all has been accomplished in that hour. He who knew God's infinite love, resting on Him even as man, must now bear the infinite judgment of God

against the sin of man. But He gave Himself up to it, full well knowing what was before Him. "The cup which my Father has given me, shall I not drink it?" And now, "It is finished," drained to its last dreg of bitterness. All that God is against sin has been fully manifested as no *creature's* measure of suffering, though it be filled to the full for eternity, *could* have made it known. The righteousness of God has had its utmost claim against sin, and the sinner, fully met in the death of Him who knew no sin, but who was made sin for us. In His death the history of the life of the first man, that could only sin against God, has been closed under God's judgment executed to the full for the believer. All that God is for the sinner has found its full expression. And the Son of man has found His brightest glory in the moment of His deepest humiliation and anguish; as He said, "Now is the Son of man glorified, and God is glorified in him." But what will God do for the One that has thus accomplished it? "If God be glorified in him, God shall also glorify him in himself, and shall straightway glorify him." (John xiii. 31, 32.)

There is a Man before us that has established a claim upon God for glory—"Glorify thy Son." The first chapter of Ephesians gives us God's answer to that claim; He comes in to raise Him from the dead, and set Him at the highest point of heavenly glory. The glory of God, once grieved away from Israel, and the earth, by man's sin, now makes room for itself to come in and wrap itself around the One that has glorified God in bearing the judgment, and making an end of the first man; and we behold "the second man" "raised from the dead by the glory of the

Father," set "at his own right hand in the heavenlies, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named." (Eph. i. 19-21.)

Two blessed results flow from all this, according to the Lord's words before us:—First, that to know God now fully revealed is already our portion and privilege, beyond which there can be none in eternity save the enlarged capacity to enjoy Him, and the absence of every hindering influence. So it is in the Epistle to the Romans, which has already reached the climax of its blessedness and joy in chapter v. 11, where we are set to "joy *in God* through our Lord Jesus Christ;" and similarly when in Revelation xxii. 1-8—the furthest glance scripture gives us into eternity—we find the sum of all possible blessing is in "God himself shall be with them, and be their God." How blessed, beloved, to be drinking already of these springs of joy, inexhaustible—because in God Himself; nay, to have them formed within us by the Holy Ghost, as a well of living water springing up into everlasting life, that leaves no room for thirst.

But, and as essential to this first result that I have alluded to, and which we find in verse 3, there is, secondly, that which forms the main subject of the rest of the chapter. For, power being given Him over all flesh, He proceeds, for the glory of the Father, to associate us whose existence, according to the first Adam, has been closed in His death, with Himself, the last Adam, in the whole place He has entered into in resurrection, as man with God. He can do this now in divine righteousness. From

verse 6 on it is opened out to us in all its wonderful detail of blessing, not so fully doctrinally as in the Epistle to the Ephesians, but in connection with the heart of the Lord Jesus, and the circumstances in which these new and wonderful associations for us have to be made good.

We see that it is already in His heart to have us thus with Himself in Psalm xxii. For no sooner is the darkness over, and His voice is heard as from the transpiercing horns of divine judgment against sin, than we find Him occupied with those whom He can now associate with Himself in the light in resurrection, that is, those for whom He has borne the judgment. And in the midst of the assembly of such, owned as His brethren, He declares the name in which is found all our blessing, and leads us in the songs of praise. Alone, unutterably alone in the awful cry of overwhelming darkness, He has now those with Him whom He can lead in song of resurrection light and joy. We find all actually realised in John xx., when, from the mouth of the open sepulchre, He can say to His "brethren"—"I ascend unto my Father and your Father, and to my God and your God." Still, the Lord anticipating all, as ever in this chapter, and yet at the same time looking back, I have no doubt, over His path on earth, can say (ver. 6), "I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gavest me out of the world." He could say of all His life, "He that hath seen ME hath seen the Father." Oh how blessed, beloved, to know the Father thus! Every ray of the glory and the grace of our God shines out from the face of Him who has loved us and wrought the work,

upon the ground of which He has put us into His own relationship with Him, where we can gaze upon Him, and know the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ as our own God and Father.

But now there is a secret of divine love that must be disclosed in connection with the name He gives us all through this scripture. "Thine they were, and thou gavest them me." Who could have thought of such a gift passing between the Father and the Son? It is this gospel which brings before us so markedly the gifts and giving of divine love. We have scarce opened it when we come upon the gift which is the alone adequate expression of the love of God to this perishing world—"God so *loved* the world, that he *gave* his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life"—the immensity of the love to be only known and measured by the gift! But here it is not the love of God to a world of sinners, it is the Father's love that has sought expression for itself to His Son, and found it in the gift to Him of *those who have received Him from God's love* while they were yet sinners.

"Thine they were, and thou gavest them me:" it was the very thing the heart of Christ would have had, and we are before Him precious, not so much here from any value in the thing possessed—though we be to Him as the pearl of great price, for which He sold all that He had—but as the sweet expression of His Father's love. Thus received from the Father, what can He do but give us eternal life (ver. 2), that in it we may have part in all the blessing and joy and glory of His own place with God, as risen from the dead?

Hence flows the peculiar blessedness of this chapter, not simply in what we are given by it, but in that we get it *with Him*. Who that knows Jesus will not own that it is better than all we have, that we have it with Him? Is He Son with the Father? Then He will have *us* sons, "not ashamed to call us brethren"; and by the revelation of the Father's name He gives us our home where He has His—"I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gavest me." But we are not at home yet. Nay, the home this gives our hearts in the Father's presence makes us keenly feel that we are not there, but in a world that had no place for Him we love, save the grave of His rejection, and which has thus become a wilderness for us. How are we to be maintained in the sense of our place in the Father's home and heart?

"I have given unto them the words which thou gavest me." (Ver. 8.) Beloved brethren, the Lord Himself has been in our circumstances. He knows the trial of them full well. He has been as a Son away from home in this heartless world before us. He knows the need and desolateness of it. His joy was full, not because of the circumstances, but in spite of them. What was the power of it? He was sustained by *the words* of His Father in the unclouded consciousness of His love. He lived by every word that proceeded out of the mouth of God. And now having given us His own place in that love, He gives us, when He needs them no longer, the words that belong to it. Who does not know how the child away from home looks for and prizes the home letters and is sustained by them, realising afresh his unchanged

place in the home affections? Just thus it is that the Lord Jesus meets our need. Oh, wondrous grace, and further unfolding of the completeness of our association with Him! He leaves us the words that made all bright for Him where all was darkest without them. Thus, and thus only, by feeding on the Father's words, are the children sustained in the children's joy while away from their home. "These things I speak in the world, that they might have my joy fulfilled in themselves." (Ver. 13.) His place in the Father's love is ours; the words that were the means of His abiding enjoyment of it down here are ours; and thus He provides that His joy may be ours to the full while we are yet here. Yet there is more!

Would we know our path in the world? The Lord Jesus will mark it out for us. It is His own. Surely it must be so. If His place is ours above, His path must be ours below. *He* could not give us another; that would be to dissociate us from Himself; could *we* consent to it, beloved? Let us see how He does it. "I have given them thy word." (Ver. 14.) The "word" here is not to be confounded with the "words" of verse 8. The order of the truth is very blessed, for the "*words*" (or "sayings" rather), as we have seen, have to do with our place before the Father, and are given us to maintain us in the enjoyment of it, till we are actually there. Not till this our place is perfectly settled, and provision made for full enjoyment of it, is there a word about our walk here. The heavenly light of that place can now be shed upon the path for us. All is bright up above. Not a cloud between us

and our home there, where Jesus has His. With what different feelings we can turn to the scene that was *once* our home! And what rest to find that our path in it simply flows from our association with Him—confirming instead of causing a question as to it. Have we in times gone by, sought to walk so as to *attain* to be where Jesus is? We never could arrive there, or ever conceive the path that He gives us here. The Christian comes down to walk upon earth because he has got Christ's place in heaven. Hence it follows that Christ's path is his.

"I have given them thy word." It is the expression of the mind of God, which had formed the path of the Lord here, and all that He was in it so completely, that He Himself *was* that word. He gives us *Himself*, in fact, as the perfect expression of God's mind, to form our path on earth; insomuch that the world, able to identify us with Him, "hath hated them, because they are not of the world, *even as I am* not of the world." Oh, beloved, how such words ought to put us to shame when we think of how little we have shared the portion of Christ's rejection and trace it to the world's having seen so little of Christ in us! We have forgotten *what we are*. For the Lord speaks not of what we ought to be, but of what He has made us, and therefore of what we unchangeably are. We have walked, alas! too often as men in the flesh and of the world, seeking to conform ourselves to the course and fashion of the world, instead of maintaining in our path our place of heavenly association with Christ, and therefore of complete separation from it.

This was just what the Lord Jesus dreaded for us,

therefore He prays, "not that thou shouldest take them out of the world." Deep as His desire was to have us out of it with Himself, the time had not come for it, and He would be, as ever, subject to the Father's will—"but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil." To fill the place of the Lord Jesus in testimony for God was now to be our business here. This is marred and ruined in the measure in which place is given to the flesh or world. We are encompassed with the danger. What is to be the delivering power? "Sanctify them through thy truth: *thy word* is truth." (Ver. 17.) We have seen the word of God as that which perfectly formed Jesus in His path. Hence He is the truth, for it was fully displayed in Him. That is, His presence tested and judged everything, because it revealed God, and shed the light of God upon man, the world, and all that was in it. Now He adds, "And for their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth." He sets Himself apart from all that is of the earth by going to heaven, to give its form and fashion to His people's path here, and to them in it. He is objectively presented by the truth to our hearts where He is, and "we all, beholding the glory of the Lord with unveiled face, *are changed* into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Lord the Spirit." (2 Cor. iii. 18.)

This is the transforming power of the truth, beloved. It is the revelation of *Christ* to us; of the One who has first set us free to be occupied with Him, by making an end, in the cross, of all that we are by nature, that would otherwise have hindered this. Do we fully apprehend this immensely important

principle for our walk? To be like Christ is the desire of every renewed heart. The law no longer satisfies, for it was only the measure of what God required of man in the flesh. Nothing short of full conformity to Christ in glory will satisfy God for a man in Christ. "He hath predestinated us to be conformed to the image of his Son." And the Christian could not accept less. But is not the moral likeness of His glory to be produced in our walk? This is what presses upon many, "I know I am to be perfectly like Christ in glory; but how may I be like Him in my ways here?" Here again Christianity stands out in marked contrast to the law. The law demanded that man should be what he ought to be, but had no power to deliver him from what he was. But the gospel has announced my deliverance, by setting me in Christ before God, outside all that man is in flesh, which has received its judgment in the cross. And now, if I am taught that "he that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked," this is not to turn the eye in upon self again; but, disowning it as judged and gone from God, it fixes my eye on Christ, unfolds before me more and more what He is who is my life, and thus forms me like Him. It is not effort to be like Him, which would be to assert that I have power to make it, and only lead to wretchedness in the discovery that I had none; but simply occupation with Christ as the object of my heart. Here is only rest, peace and joy; herein lies the *power* of Christianity—of the truth to assimilate me now in character and ways to Him.

We have only to yield ourselves honestly to the

truth, beloved! Fixing Christ in the glory before our eyes, it necessarily judges all that is not Christ, searching and testing us thoroughly. But then He only can fill and satisfy every desire. The truth, by revealing Him, does this, and hence weans us from the things which it judges. Does the world shine bright, decked out by Satan in its best? There is a Man in the glory that shines brighter. His puts out the glory of all else. Is there a cherished interest of the heart that is not Christ? Oh, beloved, what could have a moment's power longer, now that He tells us of Himself, and seeks to lead us into a deeper insight of what we are to Him? What could prevail against the power of such love, that only seeks to separate us from what must necessarily hinder our full enjoyment of it? It is, of course, by the power of the Spirit that Christ is thus revealed to us in the truth. Hence the important place that the Spirit has in this aspect of our sanctification, in which it may most truly be said to be progressive; for we are not like Christ yet, nor ever shall be *perfectly*, till we "see him as he is." One sight of Him *as He is*, and we are transformed into His likeness, to bear it for ever. Till then, it is needful to bear in mind that this practical sanctification is carried on for us, by the Spirit's revelation to us through the Word, of Christ, where He is in glory, and of our place in Him.

But association with Christ does not close with the path below, blessed be His name! The rest of the chapter will disclose new and wonderful aspects of it. And now I must recall your minds, beloved, to the first part of it, in which we had the work of Christ before us in its resulting glory for God and for Him,

and this laid as the firm basis of all the resulting blessing for us. There were two parts of the glory claimed by Christ as the Man that had glorified God on earth. The first verse gave us His claim to all the fresh glory that, so to speak, He had earned of the Father. And will He have us sharers of the glory with Him! Yes, indeed, He will! "And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them." (Ver. 22.) The day for the manifestation of it has not come yet. The present is still the time for suffering with Him—"if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together." But He has already received the promise of the Father, and united us to Himself in that glory by the Spirit. "For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, and have been all made to drink into one Spirit." Hence it is that if Ephesians i. 20-22 gives us the glory of Christ as Man at the right hand of God, and looks on to the day when all things shall be actually put under His feet, we find saints in blessed association with Him in it all, as "the church, which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all." Then will be prepared the scene for the display of the counsels of God for His own glory in man. The first man, Adam, with headship given him in the old creation, has fallen and dragged down all in his ruin; but the heavens shall give out the last Adam, who, having made good the glory of God in the fallen scene, is the One in whom all things in heaven and earth shall be securely headed up—"in whom also we have been made heirs." Then will be found associated with Him in the headship and inheritance of all, the saints given Him in the time of His

rejection to be His body, His bride, the heavenly Eve of the last Adam. Then "he shall come to be *glorified in his saints*, and to be *admired in all them* that believe in that day," when we shall be no longer in the path where we have so deeply failed, and, alas! dishonoured Him, but when, in spite of all, we shall be in the displayed glory of Christ.

And Oh, beloved, in what have we more deeply failed than in that which is again and again expressed here as the dear desire of the heart of the Lord for those whom He has been given out of the world—"That they may be one." At every fresh aspect of blessing presented to us this is given to us to be the practical result. Was it wondrously unfolded to us that we have been set as children before the Father, and provision made for our joy, while we were left for a little in a foreign world, in the consciousness of it? But, how precious the assurance, the heart of the Lord Jesus is occupied about us. "I pray for them." Why should He thus bear the burden of our need in intercession continually? The reason was twofold. "They are thine." We were objects of the Father's interest, and this was ever first in the heart of the Lord Jesus. But had He not His own interest in us? To be sure He had. And here we must hide our faces in shame, while we adore the grace that, looking at us not as we walk, but as grace has made us, could say, "I am glorified in them." Nor do these interests of the heart of the Father and Son clash in the least. All is in unison there—"All mine are thine, and thine are mine." One in interest, affection, object, all; now He prays, "Holy Father, keep through thine

own name those whom thou hast given me, that *they* may be *one as we*." Oh, beloved, in the measure in which the name of the Father with whom we stand in so blessed relationship acted upon the heart of each child, it would knit heart to heart together down here, in interest, affection, object, all, in a oneness which finds its only fashion in the oneness of the Father and Son.

But again, have we been given the word that found its perfect expression in Jesus—the truth of all that He is where He is now—that, acting upon our hearts and consciences, it might separate us from all that is not Christ, and which, therefore, would hinder fellowship with the Father and with the Son? It was, that each walking in this divine fellowship that admits of no thought that is not in accordance with it might consequently be one with one another on earth —"as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one [not now "as we," but further] in us"—a oneness gaining its character from this fellowship. How could two of us be in such divine company, having every thought in common with God, and yet be found in different paths on earth? No, beloved, it could not be. That the saints are divided and scattered on earth is the witness how little we individually have known of fellowship with God. None can absolve himself from the shame that becomes us, and the place of humiliation before God —our only true one—in such a state of things. For a little moment after the church was formed the saints were found walking in this oneness, but oh, how soon it was broken up by self coming in, as recorded for us in the Acts of the Apostles!

Yet there is even now what Satan can never touch, though the Lord could not here speak of it. It was still a mystery hid in God, but near to be revealed. We have already glanced at it in connection with the given glory of Christ. I speak of the fact that all saints in the present time have been formed into one body by the Holy Ghost, spoken of in Ephesians iv. 3 as the "unity of the Spirit." It is blessed for us to bear in mind here, where we have had to speak of and to humble ourselves about the failure of saints to manifest their oneness *in their walk before the world*, that they *are one body* indissolubly before God. Hence it is that the Holy Ghost never lets us down from our responsibility as to this, but summons us to use diligence to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. If we cannot get the saints together again upon earth as a whole, we can at least, if there are any that will be true to Christ and to what is so precious to Him, walk apart from all that disowns this unity, endeavouring to keep it in the only spirit compatible with it, "with all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love." The danger is, that in looking at what has failed we should lose faith in that which can never fail, and therefore all sense of responsibility to "walk worthy of the vocation wherewith we are called." But, blessed be God, we can turn sadly, yet with relief, from the scene of the saints' failure and consequent break-down of testimony in the world, to where there can be no more—to what we have presented to us in verses 22, 23. Here all will be perfect, because removed from the responsibility of saints to the faithfulness of

the Lord Jesus, shining out the brighter by our very failure.

"And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one: I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one." If Satan seemed to have succeeded in thwarting the desire of Christ for me, it was only for a little while. All will be made good by Him when He brings us out from heaven, perfectly one in glory. But the solemn thought is, that it will be too late for the world to *believe* then that the Father sent Christ. (This might have been if we had walked in manifested oneness now. Ver. 21.) Then it will "*know* that thou hast sent me;" for none can dispute it. "The glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it;" but not to participate in it, as those who believe in Him do now. And yet, beloved brethren, in spite of all, the world shall also know in that blessed day of manifested glory "that thou hast loved them, as thou hast loved me." Yes, the Lord Jesus will have the world know our wondrous association with Him, that enters even into that which is deepest—*His place in the Father's love.* *We* do not wait till then to know it. We know it now, "to the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved." (Eph. i. 6.)

Still there is that which goes beyond all this to me, beloved. There is in our association with Christ that which can, and will, be *displayed.* But there is that which never can, belonging to the deeper intimacies of the love of Christ. There is what surpasses the glory—nay, all that He gives—it is to be with Him-

self. Do *you* desire it? Jesus goes on to demand it! His love cannot be satisfied with less. "Father, I *will*"—it is the word of One whose will none can dispute—"that those, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am." Oh, think of the love that actually cares to have us with Himself! He cannot bear that it should be always as now, that we should be here in the desert world, and He in the Father's house. He has given us His home to be ours above. He has called us to His path below. He will have us share His glory by and by, even as now we have His place in the Father's love. But as yet He is not satisfied. Yes, we must be *with Him where He is*. Oh, beloved, do our hearts respond to this love? Have we felt that He is not here, and that nothing can satisfy *us* but to be with Him? Or have we been allowing our hearts to get entangled with the things of this life—its pleasures, or its cares—making, or else seeking, our home in a world where He is not? Let us in presence of such love look well to it, lest we are accepting something short of what is His desire. "With me where I am;" the blessing and joy of one to whom the Lord Jesus is precious is summed up in this for eternity. *It is heaven* to be where He is. *Yet* there is more—"that they may behold *my glory*, which thou hast given me: for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world."

We have seen that there were two parts of the glory claimed in verses 1–5 of our chapter. The glory of verse 1 He has given us: but in verse 5 He speaks of another character of glory—"Now, O Father glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was." He

claims to enter as man into the glory that He has had eternally as the Son with the Father—His own essential divine glory. Now it is this glory that He speaks of in verse 24, and therefore calls it "my glory," only that He chooses to take it in connection with His Father's everlasting love as the expression of that. Here surely association with Him must close. But stay—He will have us where He is, to *gaze* upon it! It is the only thing in the chapter that He does not give us to partake with Him, because He cannot. He cannot impart to another divine glory. But, Oh, beloved! what a fresh surprise of love, to be added to all we have already had, and that goes beyond all. He demands that we shall be with Him, that we may behold with undazzled eye what we can never have part in.

But there is that which even makes it more precious still in the way in which the Lord Jesus treats His glory, even as the expression of the Father's delight in Him from eternity. If you have one you love, you want that everyone should know his value, that they may appreciate him. In a cold, heartless world, we can find but few to care about Him, whom having not seen we love. Men see no beauty in Him that they should desire Him. Even our own hearts are so little able to enter into the excellency of His glory. We can tell that "He is the chiefest among ten thousand; yea, he is altogether lovely!" But words fail: we are conscious at least that He surpasses all our thoughts of Him. "No man knoweth the Son but the Father." Yes; but He knows our longing desire. He will bring us in, to be satisfied at last, as we gaze upon the glory

which is His Father's expression of infinite delight in Him. Could anything be more exquisitely grateful to hearts that really love Him? Jesus knows it; His love has it all in store for us, the objects of it!

Oh, beloved! what can be added to this wonderful companionship with Christ in all that is His? Only a few more words to confirm all, and apply it practically, if we have hearts to take the impress of them. "O righteous Father, the world hath not known thee. but I have known thee, and these have known that thou hast sent me." (Ver. 25.) Associating us with Himself in the knowledge of the Father by the declaration of His name, in a world that has not known Him, He does it as the Son in the bosom of the Father. Therefore His revelation of that name is according to the love in which He dwells, which He alone can know, and of which He is the object; that we now, dwelling in it, may be formed by it in all our thoughts and ways towards one another. "And I have declared unto them thy name, and will declare it: that the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them. (Ver. 26.) It is, in fact, the manifestation of Christ Himself—that is, of the life and nature of God in us. "No man hath seen God at any time. If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us." (1 John iv. 12.) Nothing short of *Christ in us*, before the world, could be the practical living out of the wondrous place we have been given in and with Christ before God; till at last the grace that has given and maintained us in this place, in spite of all our failures, shall issue in the glory that is the consequence of it.

Oh, beloved brethren, have we apprehended anything of this precious revelation of the heart of Christ? The Lord grant that it may lay hold of our hearts in the transforming power that belongs to it, that He may, indeed, be glorified in us.

"HE IS NOT HERE."

THERE are three things that seem to me chiefly to give character to the Christian's path on earth and to form him in it: The Lord Jesus is not here; the Holy Ghost is here; and, lastly, the Lord Jesus is coming again.

Now before ever the presence or absence of any one can be anything to me I must first have learned to know them; and if I have learned to know one that has drawn out my heart to himself, and become everything to me, his presence or absence is of the greatest possible moment to me, and gives its whole complexion to my life. Now I ask my own heart, and yours, beloved, How far has the Lord Jesus so become known to us that His absence tells upon us and affects the whole scene of our path through the world? Have we learned to know Him well enough to miss Him? It is a solemn question, involving so much for the heart of Christ in us, and I feel must deeply humble each one of us before Him. At times perhaps some of us may have known what it is to feel His absence as that of the One we love; but, oh, how quickly He is forgotten again and the blank scarcely felt at all! Is this, beloved, as it should be? Why is it thus with any who know Him? But I fear the truth is that few of us have the Person of the Lord Jesus Himself sufficiently before our hearts. I am not now raising the question as to whether we know His work—or rather the benefits resulting to us from

it. You know your sins are forgiven. You know that your peace is made. But do you know the *One* that has accomplished all for you? Has His love—displayed in what He has done for you—led you to such a knowledge of Himself as has made Him everything to you? "Unto you therefore which believe he is the preciousness." (1 Pet. ii. 7.)

It may well humble us, in reading the gospels, to find how hearts there were attracted to Christ for what they found in Him, when they could have known so little of Him or of His work compared with what we might know.

Look at the two disciples in John i. John the Baptist's eye marked Jesus as He walked—he is filled with the sight, and speaks as though involuntarily, "Behold the Lamb of God!" The Spirit of God bears home to the hearts of two of His disciples these precious words. It bursts in upon them what Christ was and at once detaches them from all else, even from their religious teacher (often the hardest link to break), by attaching them to Him. "And they followed Jesus!"

But the Son of man had not where to lay His head in the world that was all His own. It had rejected Him; will it make any difference to them? "They abode with him that day," casting in their lot with the One who had now become their all. Precious unison with the heart of God that found all its delight in that lowly One! Well does the Holy Ghost take care to record the very hour of the day on which, in the midst of the heartless rejection of the world, two hearts found in Jesus that which attracted them away from every other object.

Look again at Mary at the sepulchre in John xx. "The disciples went away again to their own home," but Mary had no home for her heart where Jesus was not. "She stood without at the sepulchre weeping." She wept because she could not find the dead body of her Lord. Your intelligence might readily rebuke her tears; but there is something more precious to Christ than intelligence, and that is a heart that loves Him. The tears told Him of one that loved Him on earth and missed Him now that He was dead, or that she knew not where to find Him. All her affections were about the spot where they had laid Him. Bright, heavenly visions are seen; angels are at the tomb; but what are they to one who has known *Christ?* They can but say, "Woman, why weepest thou?" Beloved, what place has our risen Lord—revealed to us now from the glory where He is, with its light shed back on all that He has done—in our hearts? He is gone from the earth, where we are still. Do we miss Him? Not that I would undervalue intelligence. Only intelligence of Christ risen could have dried Mary's tears. But do our hearts and consciences keep pace with our intelligence?

Yet there is a necessary condition of being able to love Christ, and therefore miss Him here; and that connected with intelligence of what He has done for us. It is that we should be free to be occupied with Him. Now, this would be impossible if there was still a question as to our interests for eternity to be settled with God. But even when Christ is known as the One that has borne our sins and put them away, there is still a deeper need, in order that the heart should be fully set free for Christ, namely, that we

should know how God has dealt with the nature of sin within us. Christ not only "loved us and washed us from our sins in his own blood;" but God "hath made him sin for us, who knew no sin," so that He has there executed judgment on *all that I am*, as well as upon all that I have done. He has judged *me*, "condemned sin in the flesh." Thus in the cross of Christ a full end has been made before God for the believer of all that he was in the flesh. He can say, "I am crucified with Christ." (Gal. ii. 20.) Until he sees this there will inevitably be the attempt to improve and make something of the flesh; but this is impossible, and the result is wretchedness in proportion to the sincerity of the effort. "Oh wretched man that I am!" may then lead on through the Lord's mercy to the cry, "Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" But until I see that the first man is gone from before God in the judgment of the cross, and that I am now in the second Man—Christ risen out from that judgment—the flesh still in me, but I no longer in the flesh—self is still the object, and not Christ.

So blessed and perfect is the way that God delivers us from all that would otherwise come in between us and Christ, that the affections may be free to go out after Him. All *my need* being more than met by Christ, I may now be occupied in learning of the One that has met it. He has loved and given Himself for us, and now counts upon our hearts for Himself.

Hear Him in John xiv., "Yet a *little* while I am with you. . . . Let not your heart be troubled." Oh, beloved, has His absence ever caused us a tear? It is in the measure we have known the sorrow of

His absence that we can enter into the provisions He has made for our comfort while He is away—opening the Father's house to us with the promise of His coming, and of the Holy Ghost being given to throw us into that wondrous circle of divine intimacy, that we may know Him as we never could have known Him on earth.

And this is just the significance He gives His supper in 1 Corinthians xi. 23–26. Listen to the voice that, speaking to Paul from the glory, tells us what we are to Him even there, "This do in remembrance of me." He cannot bear to be forgotten by those He loves on earth to the end. Worthless hearts! we may say truly. Yes; but Jesus cares for them; He has died to make them His, and counts on our remembrance of Him—giving us only that that may be the sweet expression of it. If the supper of the Lord means anything, then, as we partake of it, it means this—that we love Him, and miss Him in the world that has cast Him out. He invests it with just this character Himself: "For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew forth the Lord's death till he come."

It is the weeds of the church's mourning in a scene that has been desolated for her by the death of Christ, and in which she finds no rest for her heart, only lingering round the spot where His cross and sepulchre express the heart of this world towards Him. We know Him by faith in the glory, and have rest in communion with Him there; but this only makes the rejection of Him more keenly felt, and the cross, that by which the world is crucified to us and we unto the world, as we turn to our path

through it. "Away with him, away with him! crucify him, crucify him!" rings in our ears. It is the judgment of the world, and the links that connected us with it are broken. The cross, the death of Christ, henceforth characterises the one that loves Him. We call in our hearts from the blighted scene, and get away in spirit as far as possible from it, only seeking more complete identification with Him in His rejection, as the best and brightest portion He could give us in such a world. It is not the attainment of an advanced Christian, but what Christ looks for from every heart that knows Him.

Well—He is gone, and the opened heavens shew Him to us, to whom the earth refused a place, raised as Man to the highest point of heavenly glory. And this is the consequence of having glorified God on earth as to every question of sin, so that He is able to give us a place with Himself there. But for a little while we tread the scene of *His rejection;* yet not to be left comfortless in the desolation of it.

This brings us to the second thing that forms the Christian's path. *God the Holy Ghost is here.* And if we have challenged our hearts as to the effect of the *absence of Christ* upon them, it becomes us now solemnly to ask, What sense have we of the presence of the Holy Ghost, that other Comforter? I am not now speaking of the *work* of the Holy Ghost in quickening souls, but the presence of a divine Person here, of whom Jesus said, "The world cannot receive him, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and *shall be in you.*" (John xiv. 17.) This is consequent upon

the glory of the Son of man at the right hand of God; for before His ascension it could only be said—"The Holy Ghost was not yet given, because that Jesus was not yet glorified" (John vii. 39), and the Holy Ghost's presence in the world ever since has been the witness of that glory.

What an important bearing this truth must have upon our path, beloved. The Lord has even said, "It is *expedient* for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you." (John xvi. 7.) But, oh, how sad it is to find that for the most part Christians scarcely know whether there be any Holy Ghost, as for any practical recognition of His being here! Thousands of sincere people pray for Him to come, as though the Lord had forgotten His promise these eighteen hundred years, or else they pray that He be not taken from them, as if He had been unfaithful to it now that He has sent Him—for He said, "He shall abide with you for ever."

How far, beloved, has the presence of God the Holy Ghost dwelling in us, become a reality to our souls? How immense the consequences that flow from such a truth! Let us think of some of them. The Spirit of adoption sent into our hearts—by Him we cry Abba, Father. Come from the glory yet to be revealed to us—joint-heirs of it with Christ—He brings the power of it as a present reality into our hearts, making the desert more real as we pass on to it. He links Himself up with our present suffering. Do we groan within ourselves in sympathy with a suffering creation? It is the voice of the Spirit making intercession for us according to God. By

Him we know Christ where He is, and are united to Him—making the scene of the glory the home of our hearts, if His cross has desolated the earth for us. What "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath entered into the heart of man" God hath revealed unto us by His Spirit. The seal for God upon us, He is the earnest in our hearts of all that is yet before us in actual possession. Our bodies are the temples of the Holy Ghost. He is the power of the life we have from God, rising up to its source and level in Him in communion, forming thus within us the "well of water springing up to everlasting life," of which, as we drink, we never thirst again: the power, too, of the overflow of the joy that goes up to the Father in the worship He seeks; while out of the fulness of it "flow rivers of living water" to the desert scene around us.

Oh, beloved, is it true that the Holy Ghost has come down and dwells within us! He brought us the sweet tidings of the One that is gone, that have won our hearts for Him. He now takes of the things of Christ and shews them to us that He may satisfy us with Him. He has not come to supplant Christ in our hearts to present another object to them, but to absorb them with *the One* we have.

Could you tarry "ten days" in the scene from which He calls you away to such an One? Had we even the decision of Rebekah for Isaac, not a moment longer could we consent to a tie holding its power to connect us with a place where He is not. We will go to the One whom, having not seen, we love, albeit the desert lies between. But the Holy Ghost will keep us sweet company by the way, be it short or

long—never ceasing, if we only let Him, to occupy us with Christ.

Thus it is that the Lord has shut us up to the Holy Ghost for comfort. How far is it practically so with us, that all comfort in Jesus' absence flows from His presence with us? How sad when we think how often we grieve Him and thus hinder the enjoyment of this rich provision of the Lord's love. Too often the positive testimony of Christ to our souls is hindered by our allowance of the flesh, and the Holy Ghost has to turn to negative this, and thus days and weeks are lost, never to be recalled. Oh, beloved! let us keep watch that our eye may be fixed on Christ, that our ear be only open to His voice, that the inward movements of the heart be formed by His word, lest we lightly grieve the blessed Spirit that dwells within us, and so hinder the whole power of our present blessing.

Then, again, if we pass from individual blessing, flowing from the presence and action of the Holy Ghost in us, there is "the house of God;" "in whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit." (Eph. ii. 22.) Committed to man to build (1 Cor. iii.), he has terribly failed in it and admitted all kinds of corruption; but God in longsuffering lingers in it still by His Spirit on earth, although a man must purge himself from all that is unsuited to His presence to enjoy that presence. But, looking deeper with God, in the midst of the outward profession there is that which is still more precious and which is out of man's reach to mar: there is the body of Christ constituted by the Holy Ghost. "For by one Spirit have we all been baptized

into one body, and have been all made to drink into one Spirit." (1 Cor. xii. 13.) Such is the bond that unites all saints upon earth with their Head in heaven and one with another, in spite of all that by which Satan has for a little time apparently divided them. But is it only given us to know this for privilege and joy? Surely, beloved, such a truth has its practical responsibilities, and to these we are summoned in Ephesians iv. 1–3. How far have we owned them and thrown all we have and are by His grace into "endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace"?

Few may be found with heart and courage for such a path, apart from all that disowns it, in the varied unities of man; but the Lord Himself will be there with the two or three that are gathered together in His name. What more could we need for joy to the full till we see Him face to face? Nor has He left us without the ministry needed by us till then. Tongues and miracles, manifestations of the Spirit's presence to them *that believe not*, may be gone; but all that is most precious and requisite for the saints remains, for the Holy Ghost is still here, "dividing to every man severally as he will."

Again I ask: Do we own Him in all this, or are we consenting to what man has substituted in room of the Holy Ghost?

But I pass on from a subject of so wide a bearing and range on our walk as Christians, to speak of that which is given us to fix our hearts in hope and expectation—*the coming of our Lord Jesus.* It is linked with all that we have seen as to the effect upon us of His absence, and the presence of the

Holy Ghost. In the measure in which we *miss* Him we shall long for Him to come again, and the Holy Ghost revealing Him to us from where He is only makes Him more necessary to us, and therefore more missed in the place of His rejection. Besides, the Holy Ghost dwells in us to bring us into the consciousness of present relationship with Christ as His body, His bride, and to form our affections according to it. Has Christ loved the church and given Himself for it? Is it the all-absorbing interest of His heart, even though He must be away? Has He put off the kingdom and possession of all things in heaven and earth that He may possess our hearts—now calling us into His own path of rejection, but by and by to share His throne and crown and kingdom? Does the Holy Ghost dwell in our hearts to be the power of our consciousness that we are all this, and more than words can tell to Him? And is His absence nothing to us? Is His long tarrying nothing to us? Oh, beloved, "The Spirit and the bride say, Come." If He waits, His desire is that our hearts may be directed into "the patience of Christ." If He gives us His word to keep, it is "the word of my patience." But He closes the book of God with the promise—the last words that were meant to ring in our ears, and have such sweetness to us, and sustain us while we wait for Him—"Surely I come quickly." It was not for us to say "quickly," though we desired it; but He knew the longing and said "quickly." Oh, has He had the deep, loving response from us that He puts upon our lips—"Even so, come, Lord Jesus!"

Do we miss Him on the earth? He counts on it.

Listen—"I will come again, and receive you unto *myself*, that *where I am*, there ye may be also." He misses us in the heavens! But it shall not be always so—"Father, I will," and it is the word of One whose will none dare gainsay—"that those also whom thou hast given me be *with me* where I am." Ah! it was not in mercy only that He saved us, it was in love that must have us now *for* Himself and *with* Him for ever. He *cares* to have us with Himself! Who could have conceived such a thing—after all our faithlessness and treachery of heart and constant backsliding and denial of Him! Oh, if we only *believed* His love and the place He has given us in it, there must be a response in us, and this is the spring and power of the hope of His coming.

See, too, how blessedly it takes us out of the earth and its objects, interests and hopes—keeps us, as waiting, loose to all that, out of which the One for whom we wait comes to take us.

The object of our hope has an immensely formative power over us, even if it be in earthly things. How important, then, that His coming should be ever brightly before our hearts as the only hope given us of God. Then shall we not only hold the doctrine of His coming, but be "*like* unto men that wait for their Lord."

Nor will it be to fold our hands in sloth and indolence; but, as really waiting for Him, we shall be alive to all His interests here, finding it our solace in His absence that we have something to be doing for Him—something in which we can express our love. And it will not be *anything* we take it into our heads to

do, but we shall be seeking out *the thing* that suits His heart, to spend and to be spent in it.

How precious to the Lord to find one thus employed on earth. He looks from the glory for such as love Him, and comes and manifests Himself to them. Do we not hear Him say, "This do in remembrance of me;" and again, "Ye shew forth the Lord's death till he come." Is it not as though He said, Do they miss Me? Do they long for Me to come again? Oh, beloved, what answer do our hearts give to the challenges of His love?

THE PATH OF THE TRUE SERVANT.

(John xii. 23-26.)

"The hour is come, that the Son of man should be glorified. Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit. He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he *that hateth his life in this world* shall keep it unto life eternal. If any man serve me, let him follow me; and where I am, there shall also my servant be: if any man serve me, him will my Father honour."

These words of the Lord Jesus give us the character of the path to which He calls His servants in these last days. They also give us the power needed for it. We find all in "If any man serve ME, let him follow ME." This marks out the path and supplies the power by which alone any of us can take it. The path is His own path. The power to make it ours lies in the hold that that twice repeated "ME" has gained in our hearts. It will be seen, too, that the path is the given test of—not the service merely—but the servant. Surely they are words that may arrest us in this day of general activity! When the day of solemn scrutiny of all comes, it will not be a question of the quantity, but the *kind* of that which has passed for service. What, then, will be the standard by which it will be tried? "If any man serve ME." It is that only of which *Christ* has

been the spring and the object, that will abide. Shall we wait till then to bring our hearts to the touchstone of Christ? Does *He* not apply it now—"If any man serve me, *let him follow me*." How solemn! It tests not only my work but me. I must know where His path is and take it as mine before I can truly serve Him. How many of us have begun at the wrong end, anxious about how to work for Christ, rather than how, first, to walk with Him! In result, we have been cumbered about much serving, with Martha, rather than choosing to sit at Jesus' feet and hear His word, and there learn *how* to serve Him as Mary did, and win His approval too.

It is only as Christ Himself is before the heart that everything else falls into its proper place. But this supposes the knowledge of what *He* is. I say not merely of what He has done for us, though this is needed and blessed too, but of what He is as the object of our hearts. We hear of one in the gospels who knew not, as yet, the full extent of His grace as we may know it, but whose heart—attracted by the display of it in all His ways with poor sinners like herself—had opened to Him as the One who now possessed it. "She loved much," and this before she heard Jesus say, "Thy sins are forgiven: thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace." If we have begun to apprehend at all the fulness of the grace revealed to us in "the glad tidings of the glory of Christ," where every need of heart and conscience before God is met, shall we stop short here? Oh, what hearts we have that could find it in them to rest in the blessing and go out so feebly to Him in whom it is ours! Does not her love put us to

shame? Nor was He revealed to her as He is to us. His glory was yet veiled in the grace of His humiliation. But now He is fully revealed from the glory in which He is, by the Holy Ghost, come to engage our hearts with Him, according to all the Father's delight in Him, expressed in that glory. What answer is there in us to all the displayed grace and glory of God in Him? Would *we* see Jesus? The hour has come; the Son of man has been glorified; the corn of wheat has fallen into the ground and died; He abides no longer alone. But, as the fruit of His death, we have been quickened together with Him, raised up together, and made to sit together in the heavenlies in Him. He has been able to unite us to Himself in the glory where we know Him. Is it too much that He should count upon all the deeper place in hearts made so wondrously His? Have we yielded them to Him? Then only have we got the power to enable us to take the path He gives us, or even fully to apprehend what its character is.

For what is the path as these words of the Lord open it out to us—"Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and *die*;" again, "he that loveth *his life* shall lose it; he that *hateth his life in this world*," and, "if any man serve me, *let him follow me*"? Oh! beloved brethren, are we prepared for a path like this? Have we apprehended what the Lord calls us to if we would really serve Him? There is the path of "life in this world." The Lord Himself has been found in it, and has set us the pattern of it—walking as man before God, perfect in obedience and dependence, but absolutely alone.

There was no one to estimate such a path. The darkness comprehended it not. He was in the world, and the world was made by Him, but the world knew Him not. He came unto His own, and His own received Him not. Perfect goodness was for the first time found in a man—the object of God's delight. Divine love and light—all that God is, were shining out in fulness in Him before man—God manifest in the flesh. But no answer from the heart of man, only senselessly indifferent or else active in hatred. "They hated me without a cause." The world would not have Him.

The rejection of Christ thus early stamps the Gospel of John, and this it is that gives its character to the path He was now entering, and calling us to follow Him in. He goes to lay down His life in the scene in which He has been rejected, to take it up in the sphere where all things are of God. He surrenders all that was so fully His right as man upon earth, to accomplish, indeed, by His death, the everlasting glory of God; yet He does not develop the effects of it here, but gives to us the same path of death—"If any man serve me, let him follow me."

Let us look at the Gospel of Mark, if we would learn further as to the path and its application to us. Here the Lord Jesus is presented to us as Servant—in the patient, unwearying service of divine love, from one scene of human need to another, till in chapter viii. He pauses to let the result come out as to man. (Ver. 27.) "Whom do men say that I am? And they answered, John the Baptist: but some say, Elias; and others, *One* of the prophets." There is the current idle hearsay of the world; but

no one cares to inquire seriously who He is! Such is the heart of man! He turns away from the general indifference to the little company of His disciples—"But whom say *ye* that I am? And Peter answered, Thou art the Christ." Blessed, divinely given knowledge (though not so fully brought out here as in Matthew)! But it was too late to make Him known now as such in the nation that had rejected Him. He turns from all that belonged to Him as the living Messiah on earth. It was no longer now the bright prospect of the kingdom. He was about to be "cut off and have nothing." (Dan. ix. 26, *marg.*) "And he began to teach them, that the Son of man must suffer many things, and be rejected of the elders, and of the chief priests, and scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again. And he spake that saying openly." It is the turning point of the Gospel of Mark. How immense the change involved for the disciples! What a blighting of their long-cherished hopes connected with the kingdom, that seemed so near to be realised! But how quickly nature rises up to resent a change that involved in it nature's death! "Peter took him, and began to rebuke him," attempting to deter the Lord Jesus from such a path. It was Satan's work. "Get thee behind me, Satan: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but the things that be of men," was the only answer of the Lord. Solemn words for Peter, and for us too, lest we be blinded by "the things that be of men," that we see not the path of the Lord and its practical consequences for us! "And when he had called the people unto him with the disciples also, he said unto them, Whosoever

will come after me, let him *deny himself,* and *take up his cross,* and *follow me.* For whosoever will save his life shall lose it; but whosoever shall *lose his life* for my sake and the gospel's, shall save it."

Such was to be henceforth the path in the scene of the Lord's rejection, where He got the cross instead of the crown of the kingdom. Oh, beloved! let us put it to ourselves whether we are a bit more prepared for such a path than they were! True, we were never given the earth as they were; but have we not *taken* it, and allowed the things of the earth to entangle and tie down our hearts, if not the grosser things of the flesh? For it is not this last that is in question here. Alas! how *we* have walked in the flesh! But the Lord Jesus had none *such* to walk in or to die to. He speaks in view of the things of "life in this world," "the things on the earth," that had once their place for man in Eden—was still and definitely the sphere of blessing, if there had been any under the law—and will be found fully in place as such, and according to God, when the kingdom is established in power. Out of all this the Lord was passing now by His death, and summoning us into His path, as we shall see more fully further on. The cross would indeed lead to the glory of the kingdom in another day, and for a moment the bright vista of it opens before the disciples' eyes on the Mount of Transfiguration, not without witness, too, of a brighter heavenly glory in which man was yet to find a place. Still, it was but a passing gleam, and the Lord turns to the reality of His death, now fast approaching, as necessary to the accomplishment of both one and the other. It is constantly before Him through the rest

of chapter ix. The disciples shrink from further insight into it. (Ver. 32.) But in chapter x. the Lord formally commits to them the path. It was the only possible one for any who had been drawn to Him as the central attractive object of their heart in the world that had rejected Him. Just so far as He has become this to us, beloved brethren, shall we delight to follow Him, and all the more readily, as we can follow Him in heart up into the heavenly glory, and know our place with Him there, as they could not yet.

The elements of the path are all out in verse 21, in the words with which the Lord convicts the conscience of the young man who thought he had observed the law perfectly. "One thing thou lackest: go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, take up the cross, and follow me." Such was the path that was now so thoroughly to test man's heart. "And he was sad at that saying, and went away grieved: for he had great possessions." The things of the earth bound him, and prevailed with him to turn away from the path of Christ. It was not anything that was morally bad. It is said "the Lord loved him," discerning in a naturally fine character traces of God's handiwork that yet remained amid the ruin of sin. It was not sin to have "great possessions." But these are now manifested to be the things that hold the heart back from the path of Christ in His rejection. "How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God! The disciples were astonished at his words." Riches had been a mark of God's favour; it was the *cross* of Christ that

altered everything. "They were astonished out of measure, saying among themselves, Who then can be saved?" This brings out the absolute impossibility of *nature* entering such a path. The power of God was needed for it. This is connected with the resurrection of Christ, and He does not, therefore, say more about it here, save that "with God all things are possible."

Then, in the next place, it is not man in the flesh merely, with nature's gain accounted of more worth than Christ, but those who think that they have given up all to follow Him, that are to be tested. For the Lord will have reality; as surely as we profess attachment to Him, the time will come when we shall be put to the proof. "And Jesus answered and said, Verily I say unto you, There is no man that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my sake, and the Gospel's"—that was the kind of path, and he who stood the test of giving up the most cherished things of this life for Christ, should have his reward—"an hundredfold now in this time . . . with persecutions; and in the world to come, eternal life." But—solemn warning for us as well as for them—many that are first in the energy of nature shall be last; and the last, seemingly slower, distrustful of themselves, as having no confidence in the flesh, would be in the end first. And so it was to prove with Peter and the rest. How little they knew themselves! "They were in the way going up to Jerusalem; and Jesus went before them: and they were amazed; and as they followed, they were *afraid*." They knew what such a destination foreboded. And

the Lord would have them in no uncertainty about it. In patient, perfect obedience, He was going down to shame, reproach and death. (Ver. 32-34.)

But the hearts of even true disciples are bent on other things. "James and John come unto him, saying, Master, we would that thou shouldest do for us whatsoever we shall desire." Oh, what unabashed self-seeking, in presence of His absolute surrender of self to do His Father's will! How terrible the cropping up of flesh in such a scene! And what was their desire? To be nearest to Christ in His kingdom. (Ver. 37.) This was what suited man—not the cross, but the ease and peace and prosperity of the kingdom. Yet the cross was the necessary path to it. "Jesus said unto them, Ye know not what ye ask: can ye drink of the cup that I drink of? and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with? And they said unto him, We can. And Jesus said unto them, Ye shall indeed drink of the cup that I drink of; and with the baptism that I am baptized withal shall ye be baptized." It was this He could give: His own portion of rejection and suffering, involving death in this world. "But to sit on my right hand and on my left hand is not mine to give, but to them for whom it is prepared." It was not the time for the rest of the kingdom, or for making good the counsels of God as to a place in it. How many of us can esteem this last, as we look on to a place there, by the grace of God? But oh! how do we esteem the present path that belongs to it? What answers to the heavenly glory and Christ known there, is the cross and rejection on earth, in the willing surrender of all here for His sake! Time

enough for the kingdom, when Christ gets it, for one who loves Him. It is the time now for passing out of everything that once held our hearts in this world, by the power of what we have got in Christ at the right hand of God.

All this testing of man at his best, and of the disciples who loved Him, by the only path that there was henceforth for one that would be fully His in such a world, and their proved failure, brings us to the question of the power needed for it. We have seen what power there is in a heart having Christ Himself simply as its object. But, if I am to go down with Christ into death, as to all that forms the life of man in this world, there must be something more. I must be in full, conscious possession of another life. It is only in the power of a life outside it all that I can accept death to it. Hence the importance of the principle upon which the Lord makes all turn in this chapter—"with men it is impossible, but not with God: for with God all things are possible." A warm, loving heart like Peter's will not suffice. Nature's energy, that will carry a man through anything in the world, cannot enable him to take one step out of it. Hence the corn of wheat must die. The disciples must learn as well as the Jews (John xiii. 33), "Whither I go, ye cannot come," even though the Lord can say to Peter (ver. 36), "Thou shalt follow me afterwards." But if, apprehending the path in theory, Peter will try it now—"I will lay down my life for thy sake"—it is only to expose himself in the attempt, and prove the need of a power outside himself, and that works in human weakness, not in confidence, if the path is

ever to be his. It is the fruit of Christ's death, and finds its first full, triumphant display in His resurrection. It is "the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of the might of his power, which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenlies." It has been further proved in the wondrous grace of God that has put us, once dead in trespasses and sins, in full association with Him there: for He has quickened us together with Christ, and has raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenlies in Christ Jesus. We have eternal life in the Son of God, and, not only that, but we have the Holy Ghost as the actual uniting bond between us and Christ, gone up into the heavenly glory; and then we have the whole power—displayed in raising Him as man into it, and setting us in Him—now to us-ward, to sustain us in the path on earth that belongs to such a place with Him in heaven.

Here I pause, that we may put it to ourselves how far we have apprehended the practical bearing of these blessed truths in our souls. Have we seen the death of Christ as not only for our sins, but as our own judgment under the hand of God, that has made an end of sins and self? This is essential to full, settled peace before God, as we have it brought out in the Epistle to the Romans. It is God's salvation beautifully shadowed forth in the passage of Israel through the Red Sea. (Exo. xiv.) Through the death and resurrection of Christ we have been thus brought to God a happy and delivered people. But there is more. The Epistle to the Colossians looks back,

indeed, at our death with Christ, but carries us on a step further—to association with a risen Christ. "If *ye then be risen with Christ.*" In Romans we had a life at the other side of death, against which no charge of sin could come, the life of Christ risen. Here this is carried on to its necessary consequence, we are risen with Him; in Ephesians we find the full result in being seated in Him in the heavenlies. But what is at once the practical consequence of being risen with Christ? (Col. iii. 1.) "Seek those *things which are above*, where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God. Set your mind on things above, *not on things on the earth*, for ye are dead." In Romans I reckon myself to be dead indeed unto sin, but in Colossians I am treated, and to treat myself, as dead to "things on the earth." My power to do this lies in that I am not only able to follow Christ up in heart and mind as my object to the right hand of God, but I know Him as my life, and am myself risen with Him. Heaven is to me the new scene of my life, relationships, interests, occupations, joys and hopes—all centering in Christ who is there. I am dead to the scene that gave me once my home, my object, my all. I have been translated in heart into a better and brighter one. It is not now a passing gleam of heavenly glory to light up the eye of the disciples (too heavy with sleep to enjoy it), ere the Lord led them down into the pathway of death. But Christ, *my life*, has gone up into the glory, and has shed down the full light of it upon me. I know *Him* there, and He has given me my place there. What can hold the heart any longer in the earth to prevent my walking through it thoroughly with Christ, till He

comes to take me actually there? It is Jordan now in type and not merely the Red Sea. I go down practically into death with Him in the power of the life He has given me in Himself, when by His own death first He had made it but the path to the heavenly glory. "And they commanded the people, saying, When ye see the ark of the covenant of the Lord your God, and the priests the Levites bearing it, then ye shall remove from your place, and go after it. Yet there shall be a space between you and it, about two thousand cubits by measure: come not near unto it, that ye may know the way by which ye must go: for ye have not passed this way heretofore." (Josh. iii. 3–4.) It is the way we must pass now: "If any man serve me, let him follow me." If I have my members still here I must put them to death (Col. iii. 5), like Israel at Gilgal—able to use the knife of circumcision at the other side of Jordan as they could not in the wilderness. If I have relationships still on earth, as undoubtedly I have, see the new heavenly light shed upon all in the exhortations that follow! But I pass on from this—not my subject now—though so important in its own place, to see one fully apprehending and walking in the path, as in the Epistle to the Philippians.

We have seen that the first essential thing in taking such a path is the rising up of *Christ* before the heart as its fixed object. This impels us into it, and nothing but the bright, fresh sense of what He is kept up in the heart will maintain us in it. Then, besides this, there is the life we have in Him, needed to our fully accepting death to all outside that life. We see both combined and in their full practical

working in that blessed servant of the Lord, the Apostle Paul, as the Holy Ghost presents him to us in Philippians iii. It is not now the doctrinal unfolding of the path as we have had it elsewhere, but one who has apprehended it and the power needed for it, and who is walking in it. Oh, beloved! what need there is that we give heed to it, lest in the day of abundance of truth we be only hearers of the word and not doers of it, deceiving our own selves; triflers with that which is the present means of our sanctification—a sanctification of which Christ in the glory is the source, character, measure and power! How inconceivable the loss of assenting to any part of the truth without the soul's subjection to it! It was far otherwise with the servant now before us. Christ, despised and rejected of men, has fully won the apostle's heart. Christ in the glory, the result of that rejection, was the one bright, blessed object ever before him. The attraction of the One whom he had seen in the glory of God irresistibly impelled him on, and drew him out of everything here, and up into that same glory to be with Him.

This is the power that makes practicable the path found so impracticable without it in Mark x. Paul, too, could say, "touching the righteousness of the law blameless." He was rich, if any were, in those things that are accounted of most worth in the flesh, but instead of going away grieved from the path of earthly loss opening before him—"What things were gain to me those I counted loss for Christ." Nor was it only in the flush of bright first love that he thus accounted of nature's gain. Have any of us known something of this? We have felt as if we

would give up everything for Him in the first joy of forgiveness of our sins. Ah! has love been declining, instead of abounding more and more—link after link reforming with things you thought you had broken with for ever? How sad to look back upon days when the truth was fresher and Christ more brightly before the eye than now! I believe this declension is inevitable when the soul stops short at the blessing received, and reaches not to having Christ personally as its object. Nothing can sustain us for Christ against the strong current of everything around us but His possession of our hearts for Himself. There is power in the simple knowledge of what He is, to put Him thus in possession. And there is growth in this divine knowledge ever bringing with it increased power. So Paul can say, "Yea doubtless, and I *count all* things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord." Nor was this all, for the testing time comes when profession will be proved—if it be real—"for whom I *have suffered* the loss of all things." And now, as he looks back on all he has lost for Christ, he puts away the previous thought of loss, "and do count them but dung."

What can resist the power of the shining down into the heart of the excellency and glory of Christ? What else is Christianity but the Christ known thus in glory for the complete severance of His people from the scene that has rejected Him? Oh! has He so arrested *our* gaze that we refuse and resent as of Satan all that would distract us from occupation with Him? Then there would be no effort of giving up what still bound hearts, but rather the dropping

off, as the withered leaf of autumn, of all that is not Christ. What remains as the longing of the apostle —"that I may know him"! Who, we might well ask, has known Him as he knew Him—proved by so complete a break with all that has power over the heart of man on earth? Still he is not satisfied. The more he knew Christ, the more he *longed* to know Him, and so it must ever be. But there is more that he desires—"and the power of his resurrection." It is the power of the place where He has made us one with Himself above. It is just the combination of object and power that we have seen to be essential to taking the path of Christ—an object that puts the heart completely outside the scene, and a life to be able to go down into death to it. Both are found in Christ where He is.

Immediately we see the apostle in the path that Peter and the rest so shrank from in Mark x. Amazed and afraid, they followed. Paul only desires more complete identification with Christ in it, to know "the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable to his death." It was with a *view to this* that he desired to know Christ better; to get to the sources of power for more thoroughly going down as to the things of nature, into Christ's path. No fear of, or shrinking from, the consequences fully apprehended by him, but a fixed, earnest purpose of heart to press more fully into the whole path. Does it not lie within the power of earthly love so to unite hearts as to make them desire to share each other's circumstances, be they what they may? And shall the love of Christ have less power with us who know Him? Say not so, beloved brethren,

but let us yield ourselves up to Him, that while He gives us His own path here, we may esteem it the best and brightest He could give, and follow it out without reserve or hesitation.

Nor is the end of such a path uncertain. "Where I am, there shall my servant be." *With Him*, in whom I have already found glory and blessedness? Yes. Paul cannot be satisfied with less. What could there be beyond it? And here, again, in contrast with the disciples in Mark x.—Did they seek the highest places in the earthly glory? Ah! there was that to Paul that was above all the glory—"That I may win *Christ*." That is his prize, his full reward. It is the object in pursuit of which he girds his loins and casts away the best earthly thing—"if by any means I may attain unto the resurrection from the dead." It mattered little what befell in the path, if this was to be the end of it—the goal ever in view. "Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended, but this *one thing I do*." Oh, beloved, do we know anything of the power of this—of a heart set absolutely upon one thing? And this one thing, not of the world, but lying completely outside it: to lay hold in and with Christ, in full resurrection perfectness, of that for which He has laid hold of me. Is it so with us? Have we allowed other objects to divide our hearts with Christ? Is not this the secret of such little apprehension amongst us of the path the Lord has set before His servants? Or, when this is apprehended in some measure, of such lack of decision in taking it—of steady, even walking with Christ when we are in it? Shall we allow what has divided us a moment

longer? Shall we dishonour the Lord Jesus, grieve the Spirit, by thus practically declaring that there is not enough in Christ to fill and hold the heart? Yet, sooner or later, all that has thus had power over us beside Him must be gone. In eternity it will be only Christ. Shall I, in the power of what He is to me now, let the last link be snapped with ought that held me back from being wholly for Him? Or shall I hold to nature's ties and to the things of the earth till He comes, or death, to *wrest* them from my grasp—till I can hold them no longer?

How the apostle weeps over those "who mind earthly things," in direct contrast with all that we have seen of the true power of Christianity—of the life of Christ in the Christian—its joys, objects and hopes. "For *our* conversation (πολιτευμα) is in heaven." There is where the Christian's moral life is spent; "from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: who shall change our body of humiliation, that it may be fashioned like unto his body of glory, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself." It is according to the same working, here carried on to its full result in glory, that He is able to subdue our hearts even now to Himself. It is found in the knowledge of what He is, revealed to us from the bright and blessed scene where He is, by the Holy Ghost. Let us, then, in the full presence of such light and glory, write death upon all that has held the heart a moment here, and press on without encumbrance to be with Him. It is easy for us with the flesh still in us to slip out of the path. Communion with Him is the only thing that will keep us in it. If Christ only

be before the heart nothing can resist His power. In dependent weakness and fear of ourselves let us cling to Him. If the heart is true He will cherish its feeblest desire after Him and strengthen and satisfy it. It is precious to Him to find one here and there who desires to serve and therefore to follow Him. "If any man serve me, him will my Father honour." In 2 Corinthians we find too that God will order circumstances so as to be auxiliary to the servant honestly taking such a path. (Chap. iv. 8, 9.) "Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body. For we which live are *always delivered unto death* for Jesus' sake." It is a solemn path utterly foreign to every principle of the flesh. The Lord give us grace to learn it of Him where only it can be learned, and where only the spring and power for it can be found. For it is only as we walk in His path that we can be His servants. "If any man serve me, let him follow me."

WISDOM'S DELIGHTS.

Part 1.

CHRIST THE PATTERN OF OUR PLACE.

(Prov. viii. 22–31; Matt. iii. 16, 17.)

There is nothing that our hearts are so slow to believe as the wonderful place we have in the love of the Father. Hence it is not to be wondered at that there is so little enjoyment of the reality of it amongst the beloved children of God; the love is so infinite in itself, and our hearts are so dull and insensible. It is all so unaccountable too if we look at ourselves. But then it is just as He said to Israel of old (they never had such a place as we have): "The Lord did not set his love upon you, nor choose you, because ye were more in number than any people; for ye were the fewest of all people; *but because the Lord loved you.*" (Deut. vii. 7, 8.) This was the only reason for it; the only account He could give of such love. If it was thus with His love for Israel, is it not infinitely more so with the love He has for us, and that has given us such a place before Him?

The thought of this has led me to the passages before us, that we may seek in the Lord's mercy to us to realise it, or rather to *believe* it. For all realisation, beloved friends, is in believing and in nothing else. In nothing more nor less than the simple faith that takes God at His word, is found the

enjoyment of these things, that have been revealed to us that we *may* enjoy them. And it may be that here, this evening, the Lord will lead our hearts a little more into the apprehension of our place in His love. Oh! surely we need to dwell much upon it here. These poor hearts get away so easily from the sense of the little we do know. There can be nothing beyond it to dwell on for ever. He has given us the Holy Ghost that we may be able now to apprehend the wonderful thoughts of His heart as He unfolds them to us.

The passage from the Book of Proverbs is one of the only two that I know of in the Old Testament that carries us back into the eternal activities of the heart of God, and gives us an *intimation* (if the time was not yet come for the full revelation) of what was in His counsels. (The other that I refer to is in Psalm xl.) The veil is drawn just for a moment, that, in wonderful privilege, we may be let into the intercourse of wisdom with Jehovah, or, as we can say, of the Son with the Father. What a scene of divine communion opens out before us! "When he appointed the foundations of the earth, then I was by him, as one brought up with him; and I was daily his delight." Does that surprise us? No! We know it could not have been otherwise. But what grace that lets us hear it thus! "Rejoicing always before him, rejoicing in the habitable part of his earth." These words indicate the *direction* of the activities of the heart of God, so to speak. Where was His love going out? If the Son (as we may say) was always rejoicing before the Father, the Father was rejoicing in the habitable parts of the earth.

"From everlasting, or ever the earth was," before even the *foundations* of it were laid (not to speak of the later work that fitted it for human habitation, and man was at last created in the image of God), the heart of God was going out to the habitable parts of it. And in this communion of divine love, the heart of the Son went where the heart of the Father went, to find His joy where the Father found His, "and MY *delights* were with the sons of men."

How wonderful the thought! And that it should be revealed to us that we might *know* that we were objects of delight to the Father and the Son, in this divine communion of divine joy, before the foundation of the world. *Do you believe it?* Does any one say, How can this be? I know that He died to save me from the hell that I deserve, but how can I think it possible for a moment, that in *me*, a poor vile sinner, the heart of God could find delight? Let us then trace it a little through His Word, and see how it can all be so certainly for us. But before leaving this scripture I would call attention to what may be overlooked in it. It may have been thought by some that the heart of God found what answered to the eternal thoughts of His love, in Eden, when the man and woman were yet there in the perfection in which they had been created.

Not so. The *first* man never entered into the counsels of God as the object of these joys. For the simple reason that Adam never was nor could be of the "sons of men" of whom the passage speaks. If we bow to the Word of God we must pass over the first man. Not in his race surely, for it was fallen and corrupt; but not even in Adam in innocence in

Eden did the heart of God find the suited object of His delight. I mean as he stood there in his innocence: for I do not question that as a sinner he became the object of God's seeking. No less came out in the first three words that fell from the lips of God on the ear of His fallen creature: "Where art thou?" Wonderful words they were, revealing man to be lost, but God come out to be the seeker of the lost!

What a condition it was that all at once came in by sin! The ruin is complete and final. In one instant, dear friends, in the entertaining of that first thought, and in that first act of sin, man had traversed the whole distance that sin could carry him from a holy God. Thus, "by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned." But it is not all at once that we are willing to accept the truth of a ruin so complete. Hence the four thousand years of the testing of the first man. What a history of abounding iniquity it has been. And yet it is only the bringing out and development before our eyes of what had become a fact as to man's condition before God, the moment he reached out his hand to partake of the forbidden fruit.

But at last the moment came when that history was to close. Test after test in successive dispensations had been applied to our condition, bringing out only more and more fully that we were lost. "But last of all he sent unto them his son, saying, They will reverence my son. But when the husbandmen saw the son, they said among themselves, This is the heir; come, let us kill him. . . . And they caught

him, and cast him out of the vineyard, and slew him." (Matt. xxi. 37–39.) It was not now God, as in the law, claiming anything from anybody; but come in Christ to make Himself known in all His love in a world of guilty and ruined sinners. It was the last and most searching test of all as to the condition in which we were. And what came out? These terrible hearts seized the opportunity of the grace that brought Him so low, so to speak within our reach, to cast Him out of the earth as unfit for any place in it. The day for man's deliberate choice was come, and they chose "not this man but Barabbas," the robber and murderer—"Away with this man; crucify him, crucify him." It was the last answer of man to the last test God had to apply to his condition. Our sin was consummated in His cross, in sin's last worst act.

The solemn history has been rehearsed before us that we may each one learn our own hearts. It is *we* who are guilty. It is these hearts that have crucified the Lord Jesus Christ. For it is no use to plead that we would not have done it if we had been there. True; it will never be within our reach actually to cast the stones off the street at Him, or to cry, "crucify him, crucify him." But it has been within the reach of all to express what we think of Him. Can we deny it, that while our hearts have been open to every folly, and vanity, and sin that Satan could present to us, they have been only absolutely closed to the beloved Son of the Father? We are proved guilty. We have been each one fully identified with the world's rejection of the Lord Jesus. The Holy Ghost is here to "convince the world of sin, because they believed not on me." Sooner or

later we must be brought to own it. God speaks to us; "The entrance of thy word giveth light"; and as surely as the tiniest ray of divine light thus penetrates the soul the effect is that we find out, not merely that we are guilty by our individual acts, but that we are absolutely lost *in Adam*. Then it is that we find that we are absolutely and for ever saved in Christ; for there, in the cross, He came and wrapped, as it were, my sins and all that I am, around Himself, and carried all into death. Thus He closed that dark history of ours for ever in the infinite depths of judgment that divine love led Him into, that we might know our place to be before God, according to all the perfection of His work and of Him who wrought it.

This, beloved friends, is the gospel of our salvation. It sets us free to close our eyes on the moral morass of the first man and his history, and to open them upon the second Man, upon Him who alone could meet the mind and heart of God. To this we are brought in Luke ii., as we hear a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, *good will in men*." Thus they usher in the dawn of the accomplishment of the everlasting thoughts of God as intimated to us in Proverbs viii. But where does the heart of God find the object of its pleasure? In a Babe born in Bethlehem—the Son of man indeed, but none of the fallen race of the first man—Himself the second Man, the Son of God, now presented to us out here on earth in all the perfection of His being. See Him at the moment of His manifestation to Israel, as we have read in Matthew iii. Oh! how blessed it

is when the opened eye of faith, turned away from all that is of the first man, rests upon the Lord Jesus. To Him the heavens were opened for the first time, and the Spirit in the form of a dove descends and alights upon Him, while a voice from heaven declares, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." The heart of God has found at last in a Man upon earth all His delight and pleasure. The Spirit in the form of a *dove* is significant. The heavenly dove that found no rest for the sole of its feet in the scene under God's judgment in Noah's day has now found a spot where it can rest abidingly. "John bare record and said: I saw the Spirit descending in the form of a dove, and it abode upon him."

Let us follow Him with adoring hearts in His lowly path. What scenes of varied testing must He pass through, but all only bringing out the sweet savour of His perfection. We have seen Him in the opening of His public path, the declared object of God's delight. It is still the same upon the mount of transfiguration: "for he received from God the Father honour and glory, when there came to him such a voice from the excellent glory, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." There is a Man upon earth that the excellent glory can claim as perfectly suited to it. Who, then, could dispute His title to step into it? But what is this that we hear? In the intercourse of saints that appear in glory they speak of His *decease* which He should accomplish at Jerusalem. If from the mount of transfiguration He had taken His place at the right hand of the Majesty on high, it would have been to leave us to perish everlastingly. It was not for this He had become a

man. He descends from the mount, to begin from the foot of it His last journey up to Jerusalem *to die*. The various stages of the journey may be traced in Luke.

But we must get the meaning of His path from His own words. What brought *Him* on the road to death? (It is plain enough why we are there.) He interprets it for us: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it *abideth alone*: but if it die it bringeth forth much fruit." (John xii. 24.) Mark the words: they call for our deepest attention.

We have been looking at the path of one perfect Man, if there was but one, across the moral waste of this world: One in whom the heart of God could rest, who was no other than God manifest in the flesh; and there we rest. But we have seen that His presence here was the proved absolute absence of anything in man's heart to answer to anything in God's. When we saw Him there was no beauty that we should desire Him. That was our estimate of the perfect object of the Father's delight: "he was despised and rejected of men." As He has to say in such solemn words: "They hated me without a cause." Clearly, then, there was no man that He could raise to His own level as a man walking here. He might have taken His place in His perfection as man in the glory of God, but if He had, He must have been *alone* in it for ever. How, then, would the counsels of God have found but a partial fulfilment: for "His delights were with the *sons of men*"—not one but many. The precious corn of wheat must die that it may not abide alone in its

perfection, "but if it die it bringeth forth much fruit."

But there was more than this in that deepest point of His humiliation. Therefore it was that when Judas went out to consummate his dark treachery, Jesus could say, "Now is the Son of man glorified, and God is glorified in him." (John xiii. 30–32.) Let us pause and dwell upon what is here presented to us for a moment. There were two ways in which God had to be glorified. He had been glorified *in goodness* in the perfect revelation of it in giving His Son and in His whole path here. What an answer to the malignant lie of Satan! Had he insinuated in Eden that God was not as good as He appeared to be—that while He seemed to lavish upon them all earthly good, He had in reality kept back the best tree of the garden! How full and complete the answer when Jesus was there to say, "God so loved the world" (not of innocent men and women as in Eden, but of guilty rebels) "that he gave"—the best tree of the garden? Ah! that would never have sufficed to express what was in His heart—"*his only begotten Son*, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." God has been glorified in goodness by Him who was the only adequate expression of it in a world of sinners. But something more was needed. What about sin? What of the outrage upon the majesty of the throne of the heavens, of our very *existence* as rebel creatures? And God had seemed to overlook and pass it over! Now the whole question had to be entered into, and God was to be *glorified* as to *sin*. The cross was the scene of it. We find the Lord

Jesus there entering into the whole question of sin as it concerned the glory of God. This was the first thought of the heavenly host in their praise, if it is too little thought of by our poor hearts. Yet the gospel inseparably links our blessing with His glory.

In the cross of the Son of God sin was turned into the occasion of bringing God His brightest glory. Creation had displayed His Godhead and power; but that tells me nothing of His nature. A man of power may be a very good man or the reverse; power as such tells me nothing of character. But in the cross the whole character of God has been revealed. Every moral attribute of His being has shone out and been infinitely glorified. What a triumph over the worst work of the enemy! There where men and the power of darkness were doing their worst in sin, the Son of God was making good the infinite glory of God as to every question of sin. Where do our hearts turn to see all the *love* of God? The cross of Christ is the full display of it. The enmity of our hearts that followed Him even in death with the spear-thrust of the soldier, only drew out the answer of infinite love, in the blood that cleanseth from all sin. Eternity will have no new depths of divine love to disclose to us. Oh! that our hearts might enter a little more into it now. But where we see His love, there also we see infinite *holiness*. That is what makes the cross the blessed resting-place of our souls for ever. There only do we learn fully what God is against sin, if we learn there too what He is for the sinner. There too *righteousness* has been declared, and the majesty of God's throne perfectly vindicated.

Now the proof of it was to be found in this: "If God be glorified in him, God shall also glorify him in himself, and shall straightway glorify him." Has He done so? Before even the devoted women that loved Him could be at the sepulchre on the resurrection morning, the glory of the Father had made way to wrap itself around the One who had so infinitely glorified Him. He was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, and we behold Him glorified in God Himself—the proof before the universe that God has been glorified in Him as to every question of sin; for the glory is the seal now, not merely of His own personal acceptance, but of the acceptance of the work He has accomplished about sin. And where God has found glory for Himself as to sin, there we may well find the perfect rest of our souls. In the work of the cross all our sins have been searched out —all I am as a sinner judged, condemned and crucified with Him—my history as in Adam terminated in justly executed judgment. Do we not bless Him for it, and only long for hearts set free to bless Him without hindrance for ever?

But if this be so, it becomes a solemn question for our souls: have we practically broken with the first man, and all that belongs to him, in the death of Christ—accepting death with Him—so as now to be only occupied with the second Man in the glory of God? The Spirit of God has come from that glory in which He is to bear witness of Him to our hearts. Every ray of the glory of God is concentrated upon that face, once more marred than that of any man's. Every ray of the glory on His face, is telling the satisfaction of God with the work that has cleared

away my sins and me in judgment. It shines on the face of Him who loved me and gave Himself for me. I can gaze undazzled on the brightness of that glory. What a contrast with Moses—"Thou canst not see my face and live" was the answer to the request that told the need of his heart—the need of all our hearts for perfect rest before God, "Shew me now thy glory." Moses must be covered in the cleft of the rock while the glory passed by. The revelation of it would have been the destruction of all who had their standing in the first man. Even the reflection of the partial display of the glory on the face of Moses as he came down from the mount was too much for the people. What is that that he holds in his hand? It is the law that claimed of man in the flesh that he should be all he ought to be for God. The glory on the face of Moses was still connected with the unsatisfied claim of a broken law. No wonder it was intolerable. Who could stand before it? Is there any claim connected with the glory on the face of the Lord Jesus? No! It is the witness that every claim of the broken law, and of the outraged holiness of God, has been perfectly met and settled. He has been *glorified* as the *proof* of it. God has been not merely satisfied—but glorified. There is no veil upon the face of Jesus—no hand needs to hide the glory of God, that is shining on His face, from us. We can bear and bask in the sunlight of it—"We all, beholding the glory of the Lord with unveiled face" (note well—it is His face that is unveiled, not ours), "are changed into the same image." (2 Cor. iii. 18.) Where we have looked for peace that never can be disturbed there we must still fix

our gaze for the whole practical power of Christianity.

But this is only part of the testimony connected with Christ in glory, though so blessed for us. If the glory of God shines before us in Him, we are *in Him* before the glory. And this last is what gives effect so far to the eternal counsels of God. The Spirit of God would fix our eye on *Him*, that we may see the perfection in which *we* are, before the eye and heart of God.

We must turn back a little to see how this is accomplished. I would recall our hearts to the scene of His death, when not a leaf of life stirred, so to speak, in the whole creation—man dead in sins, and the Lord of life and glory dead for man's sin beneath the judgment of a holy God. "Because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead." (2 Cor. v. 14.) His death casts its solemn light upon the condition of all men. If God had to give up His Son to death, that any might live, it was the plain proof of the close of all God's ways in the past that had recognised man as alive in the flesh. The first man is given up as dead. What a scene of universal death it was, as the eye of faith looks out on it with God. One Man stands up out of that vast plain of death, victorious over sin, death and Satan: "raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father." Mark, beloved friends, there is but that one Man now before God; there are not two. There *was* the first man. We have seen his history open, develop itself, and close in sin, under God's judgment, executed in full in the cross of Christ for faith—in the lake of fire yet to be, for unbelief. There can be no possible revival of him or of his race. There is now before God the

victorious Man, the last Adam, who has made good His claim as such in divine righteousness upon the glory of God. The answer to that claim is, "the working of his mighty power which he wrought in Christ when he raised him from the dead and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places." (Eph. i. 19, 20.)

It is in that risen Christ that the believer has his place before God according to the eternal counsels of His heart. The Spirit of God unfolds all that He is that we may know that we are that in Him. He can bring it all out now, as He could not while the history of the responsible man was going on, needed, as that history was, in the patience and long-suffering of God, to bring us to the full discovery of ourselves. But now that the first man has been disposed of for God and for faith, the moment was come when He could unfold to us "his purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began." (2 Tim. i. 9.) This is what is fully brought before us in Ephesians i. We are brought back to the standpoint of God's eternal counsels to find that we were seen in all the perfection of Christ before God. Now this perfection was manifested in Him when He was upon earth.

Hence I read the verses in Matthew iii., because it helps us greatly to enter into the wonderful place we have, to see it thus set forth in Him when He was here, before redemption was accomplished on the ground of which alone He could put us into it. Let us look at the wonderful details of it.

"And, lo, the heavens were opened unto him." In the fullest way they are opened now to us. "And,

lo, a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son." In Ephesians i. 5 we find that is the relationship we have been brought into—"having predestinated us unto sonship by Jesus Christ to himself according to the good pleasure of his will." What blessed words—"to himself"! See, it is not God meeting our need; it is the heart of God satisfying itself. It was not to make us happy—He *has* made us happy—but it was for His own joy, to Himself, He counselled it. And faith just lets God have His own will and way in blessing, and takes up the place He gives us. We got the first intimation of such a glorious position in the message of Christ from the mouth of the open sepulchre—"I ascend unto my Father, and your Father: and to my God, and your God." His redemption work accomplished, He has been able to associate us with Himself in all His own position as man with God—Son with the Father. And because we are sons, He has sent the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. This name of intimate relationship had only been heard upon His lips before; now it is heard upon ours. Such was the good pleasure of His will.

But the voice from heaven said: "In thee I am well pleased." And is this for us too? It is: "According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love." Was not that just what He was: holy, without blame, in love, and before God? Thus He has had *us* before Him in His eternal thoughts, "rejoicing in the habitable part of his earth, and my delights with the sons of men." "*Before* him"—what an ex-

pression of His delight. Just as a mother puts her child out before her eyes that she may gaze upon it and be satisfied in her love, so has He set us before Him in Christ.

Nor is this all. The voice declared, "This is my *beloved Son*." And, "to the praise of the glory of his grace, he has taken us into favour in the beloved." Not one thing is reserved from us of all the blessedness of Christ's place. It might have been said, "in Christ." It is the keynote of the epistle that we hear again and again throughout it. But here the expression is purposely changed, "in the beloved," that we might know that in the depths of the Son's place in the Father's love, we have ours. This is especially what He counts on, to be to the *praise* of the glory of His grace. And so it will be for ever. The Lord Jesus will have the world know it in another day—"that thou hast loved them, as thou hast loved me." We know it now. How wonderful it is! It surpasses all our thoughts! But this just stamps it to be His own thought.

There is one more point brought out in the position of the Lord Jesus. It is that the Spirit descended and abode upon Him. This too is made good to us. Only in His case the Spirit was the seal of His own personal acceptance. Given to dwell in us, He is the seal of Christ's perfect work of redemption, and of our acceptance by it. "In whom also after that ye believed" (the glad tidings of a salvation that has taken us out of all we were in Adam, and put us into Christ) "ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise." Thus we have received the Spirit, the seal for God marking us as His, earnest

for us of all that is before us in the glory of the inheritance. Such were the counsels of eternal love, such the place we have been given by them, as God saw us in Christ, not in the first man, but in the second, before the world began. We have seen the pattern of it in Jesus when He was upon earth—then absolutely alone in it. Now He has won the glorious title by redemption, to have us associated with Him, in all the blessedness of it. And we have been given the Holy Ghost that we may know Him in the Father, and that we are in Him and He in us.

One thing must be borne in mind, to guard the glory of the Lord Jesus as Scripture ever does. What He was declared to be in the words before us, He was *personally in Himself*, the perfect object of the Father's delight. It is only as *in Him* according to the eternal counsels of the Father, and the work by which He has accomplished them that we are brought into the same place. Personally in ourselves—how immeasurable and infinite the contrast! Blessed be God! we are seen no more in the flesh in Adam, but in Christ.

WISDOM'S DELIGHTS.

Part 2.

CHRIST THE PATTERN OF OUR PATH.

(Matt iv. 1-11.)

We come now to another side of the truth that is so blessed for us and inseparably connected with it by the Holy Ghost, as we have already seen from the passage in John xiv. 20. That is, that if we are in Christ in perfect righteousness before God, Christ is in us as our life here in this world. Hence if He has given us in Himself the pattern of the *place* He has set us in before God, we find also in Him the pattern of the *path* that answers to it in the world. If the verses read in Matthew iii. give us one, those read in chapter iv. give us the other.

The path follows from the place. It is a simple principle, yet how many are trying in vain to reach the place, as if it depended upon the path! But thus neither the place nor the path according to God are ever known. It is the reversal of the whole order of God; the only possible one for His glory and our blessing. The place must be settled *first*, and the soul settled in it in the sunlight of His favour, then the path flows from it. The only place that God has for any one is in Christ. It is Christ's place before Him in perfect favour and acceptance. Hence the path that flows from it is Christ's. It is impossible that it

could be otherwise. He has associated us with Himself in His entire place before the Father and God. He cannot dissociate us from Himself by giving us a path other than His own. Too often *we practically dissociate ourselves* from Him by ways unsuited to Him. But this is our failure and sin.

"Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil." Conflict follows upon blessing. That is what we are immediately brought into. There was no conflict once. We drifted on to a lost eternity in peace. The current of present things did Satan's work effectually till the entrance of the Word brought in light and life. At once we were in conflict. It was the *flesh* first occupied us, till we learned to give up the struggle as hopeless and to take our place according to the deliverance Christ had wrought for us, to know our place in Him, and no longer in the flesh. Now it is *Satan*, setting himself to dispute every step of the path in which the Lord has called us to follow Him. Perhaps we were hardly prepared for this, beloved friends: that when the full light of His presence, and of the way we have been brought into it, shone upon our hearts, the path according to it had to be taken in the teeth of Satan's antagonism. But it was not one moment sooner. *First*, the unclouded light in which we have been set; *then* conflict with Satan.

We have the example of it in Jesus. We have seen the heavens opened to declare Him the beloved object of the Father's delight. The very next thing is—He is tempted of the devil. But He who was ever with God has to be led of the *Spirit* to be with Satan. It

is the exact opposite with us; we were always with Satan and have to be led of the Spirit to be with God. "And when the tempter came unto him, he said, *If* thou be the Son of God." Was it, if possible, to cast a doubt upon the relationship, just so fully declared? Are we ignorant of his devices? Can we expect to escape? How blessed to have the Word of God simply to take our stand on and the Lord Jesus our example of how to do it. Let us look upon the wonderful scene, and note the character of the temptations, for we have in them the whole range of that with which Satan would lead us from the path of Christ.

What circumstances they were in which He was tested! "He had fasted forty days and forty nights, and was afterward an hungered." Satan suggests that He should prove His Sonship by helping Himself to bread. "If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread." But if He had stooped to become a man, man's place was to obey, not to command. Satan seeks to turn Him from *obedience*. Mark the subtlety of the way he works; for it is often in this very way we are taken off our guard, and the enemy of our souls gets a footing. There was nothing positively evil in what he presents to the Lord. Too often we are drawn away by positive evil, but not always or ordinarily. It is rather by his presenting something of which it cannot be said that there is any harm in it. Let us be warned. Wherein could be the harm of turning stones into bread if one needed it and had the power? It was not possible that the Lord Jesus could entertain such a question. The moment *we* do Satan has

gained his point. It is to give up the ground of obedience. How does the Lord Jesus meet it? "It is written [note! always "*It is written*": "by the word of thy lips I have kept me from the paths of the destroyer"], *Man* shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God."

Was there any word out of the mouth of God for it? He will not act without it. He *lived* by it: it was given that *man* might. It is not by His divine power that He stands against Satan, or it would have been no example for us; but by keeping the place He had taken as man in perfect obedience. The Word was given not merely to guide and direct man's path. It was to originate and form every movement of his being. It did so with Him. And thus we have the pattern of the Christian's obedience. We have been sanctified to the obedience of Christ—neither to think or speak or act save as the word of God is its spring. It is not the same thing as obedience to law. It is entirely different in principle. It lowers the whole character of *christian obedience* to make it obedience to the law. The law supposed a will contrary to it—"thou shalt not"—"thou shalt not." You tell the child to do something it does not like; the child gives up its will and obeys: that is called an obedient child. That was not the obedience of Jesus Christ. He never had a will of His own in that sense to give up. Christian obedience is to have no will but His. We must never again then let into our hearts the question—Is there any harm in it? The only question for us is—Is it my Father's will, that I may obey? Is it as Christ would have

acted? Is it what I have learned of the meek and lowly One, who bade me take His yoke upon me that I might find rest in walking in His obedience? It is the only path of perfect liberty. Then Satan changes his ground. You know the circumstances. "He taketh him up into the holy city, and setteth him on a pinnacle of the temple, and saith unto him, If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down"—and this on the ground of a promise from God to see if He would be as good as His word. Thus he sought to turn Him from *dependence*. "It is written, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God." What is tempting God? I will tell you what people commonly think it is: they say it is to rely only on God, instead of doing the best you can for yourself. It is exactly the reverse of the truth. *We tempt God when we do not trust Him absolutely.* Did Jesus need to tempt God to see if He would be true to His word? He *knew His heart too well.* And has He not revealed the heart of God that you and I may know it? It ought to be easy for us to trust Him. We have trusted Him for eternity. How do we trust Him for time? for the details of our daily need—our families, our business, etc.? Ah! it is often in some such trifle of present things our hearts are tested, and Satan gets entrance to lead us from the path of Christ, from simple blessed dependence upon the known heart of God.

Once more Satan changes his ground. "He taketh him up into an exceeding high mountain, and sheweth him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them; and saith unto him, All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship

me." Luke adds, "For that is delivered unto me; and to whomsoever I will I give it"—not in possession indeed, but as an object to attract the heart. The character of this last temptation is, *the world.* Let us be warned: as surely as anything in this world is presented to us as an object to be pursued, it is of Satan. God cannot offer us anything in a world that has cast the Son of God absolutely out of it. We are heirs of it with Christ. By and by He will put us into possession. When He takes possession it will be time enough for hearts that love Him to possess it. He will never dissociate us from Himself. When He takes the inheritance of all things in heaven and earth we shall take it with Him. Now He calls us into the lowly path of His rejection, and gives us His obedience, and dependence and absolute refusal of the world, to be our pattern in it.

The order of this last temptation is significant, as connected with the solemn words of the first Epistle of John. He writes to the fathers, young men and babes, according to the different stages of growth in the family of God. (Chap. ii.) To the fathers he could only say, "Ye have known him that is from the beginning." They knew Christ. There never can be any knowledge beyond that. There is no end to it. What could the world, if decked out in its brightest by Satan, offer to such? For them there is what shines brighter, eclipsing all the glory of it—"What things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung."

But the young men have not made such progress in the knowledge of Christ. They were strong and had overcome the wicked one, having for the secret of their strength the word of God abiding in them. We have seen the perfect example of this in the Lord Jesus. They all needed the warning, "Love not the *world*, neither the things that are in the world."

That was the danger for those who had overcome Satan when he came openly. Do you not think you will be tested by the world? I tell you you will. Not one escapes it. The devil, turned away at the front door, comes round to the back door in the disguise of some worldly object. But you may say, "The world would be no attraction to me." For each has his own estimate of what "the world" means: it is always just the least thing beyond what the poor treacherous heart is aiming at for itself, so easily are we deceived. But John says, "Neither the *things that are in the world*." Ah! that searches us. Is there one thing *in* the world that the heart is upon as its object? "*All* that is in the world . . . . is not of the Father." We belong to another world: we have been brought to the Father. Heaven is the revealed scene of our home, relationships, interests, joys and objects. We have been set to seek those things that are above—"Set your mind on things above and not on things on the earth." Christ is there and we belong there. There is not one thing in common between the world of the Father and this world. Not that Satan needs to present to you and me all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them, but it is his sphere in which he has power. If a less bait will not take, he can enlarge the bait *up to*

that measure; yet there is nothing in it to satisfy even the natural man—our only safety lies in the absolute refusal of the world and all that is in it.

Still we need what is positive to be able to refuse the world. The words of Jesus supply it, "It is written again, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve;" that is what is to make up the life of one who walks in His path. Nothing but God before the heart for worship and service—that is the path of simple and blessed power. It is the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ that alone gives us an object that satisfies outside this world, and so governs the heart as to make us superior to it.

The path of Jesus through the world gives us the pattern of ours, not of it, even as He is not. "He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk even as he walked." If our path has to be taken in the presence of Satan, there is a vast difference between the way we meet him, and the way the Lord Jesus had to meet him. He had to meet Satan in all his unbroken power, flushed with centuries of victory over the first man and his race. And He met him and *totally vanquished him.* It is only a vanquished devil we have to do with—"He that is born of God keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not." "*Resist* the devil and he will *flee* from you."

The Lord gave us, beloved brethren, in the simplicity of faith, to take up the place He has given us, with a little deeper apprehension of the wonderful blessedness of it. It is full association with Christ in all that He is before the eye and heart of God, and

this the eternal thought of His heart about us. The path but flows from it. Would we like Him to dissociate us from Himself in any way? *He* could not bear it. He is our life. And that life is a dependent one, as it was in Him when He was here. May we live in the atmosphere of His presence, abiding in Him, drawing upon the resources that are all there for us in Him, that we may answer a little more practically to Him here. Soon the time of testing and responsibility will be over. We shall see His face, and shall answer perfectly to Him in glory, and then, too, we shall be with Him, and that for ever. The Lord is at hand. Let us seek grace that we may be faithful to Him.

REST.

(Zeph. iii. 17; Matt. xi. 16-30; Heb. iv. 1-3, 9-11.

It is a wonderful thing that we should be able to speak of rest on our way through such a world. But there is something more wonderful still in the first passage before us (Zeph. iii. 17), that God should speak of finding rest for Himself in the thoughts and ways of His love as to us. Yet so it is. It is not merely that God has been seeking rest for *us* in the revelation He has given us of Himself in the gospel. He had been satisfying *Himself*. He *saves*, but it is to "rejoice over thee with joy." And this is the great leading thought of that parable of His heart in Luke xv. He was reserved, we cannot but feel, in the Pharisee's house (Luke xiv.); but now in the company of *sinners* He throws off all reserve, and reveals that it is the perfect blessed joy of God, not only to receive and eat with such, as the Pharisee said, but deliberately to *seek* that He might have them to receive, and that to eat with Him. Nor will He rest until the poor convicted prodigal, now kissed, embraced, and clothed with the best robe, sits at His table—"and they began to be merry." "He will joy over thee with singing." He rests in His love. It satisfies Himself, or, as the beautiful word of the original expresses it (see margin), "He will be *silent* in his love"—silent because He has no more to do, no more to reveal of what He has done, and of the place into which He has brought us before Him. He

has us out before His gaze in the perfection of Christ and is *satisfied*. What amazing blessedness for us! But the first-fruit of it is for Him. And this gives us the *source* of all rest for us; it is found in the rest there is for *God*, in the thoughts of His love, and in their accomplishment. Primarily, the passage belongs to the yet future of Israel, but much more fully to us.

But if *He* rests in His love (in Matt. xi.), He brings *us* to rest in it. But mark the way it is introduced, for it is this that gives it its full character. (Read ver. 16-24.) The Lord Jesus had been through this world and found no one—no thing to rest in. He had proved it thoroughly. Did He feel His rejection by the cities wherein most of His mighty works were done? He felt it keenly, as no other heart could. There was nothing but sorrow and trial in His *circumstances*, but He had a secret of rest: "At that time Jesus answered and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes." He knew the Father. They were the Father's ways with Him. The trial that pressed upon Him was the ordering of infinite wisdom, and of a Father's love. He takes it from His Father's hand. He answered the rejection of the cities with—"I thank *thee*, O Father . . . even so, Father: for so it seemed good in thy sight." Thus was He tested; and proved perfect in confidence and in obedience, He sees clearly as with an eye ever single, to discern the place given Him of the Father. The deeper glory of His person comes before Him, and the work He had come to do in con-

nection with it: "All things are delivered unto me of my Father: and no man knoweth the Son but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son willeth to reveal him." Rejected when presented as Messiah to Israel, He reveals *the Father* to whomsoever He wills.

But now comes the anxious question, To whom does He will to reveal Him? "Come unto *me*, all *ye that labour and are heavy laden*, and I will give you rest." Are there troubled hearts who have found nothing to satisfy, no source of rest in this poor world? He bids us come to Him that He may reveal the Father to us, and thus bring us into the secret of His own perfect rest, so that where He laid His head, who had nowhere to lay it in this world, we can lay ours now, even on the bosom of a Father's love.

The immediate connection of the verses is to be maintained, for this gives both the aspects of rest He speaks of their full character and preciousness. This first rest is not rest of conscience merely in the forgiveness of sins, as it is commonly taken, by not observing the deep connection of thought in the passage; though surely this must be first and may be included in it. But it is nothing short of the revelation of the Father to our souls.

Forgiveness of sins will not carry us far for rest in going through such a world. The heart wants relationship, nothing but divine relationships will satisfy it, and this is what He brings us into. It is an entirely distinct thing and found such practically in souls. It is not all at once, when born of God,

with most of us, that we enter into the knowledge of the *Father*, and yet in 1 John ii. the *babes* in the family of God are addressed because they know the Father. Thus it is the *privilege* of all. When we come to Jesus He would have us know that it is to the Father we have come: "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father." (John xiv. 9.) What blessed rest it is! Blessed Lord, Thou hast made good Thy word to us: we did labour and were heavy laden, and Thou hast drawn us to Thyself, and revealed to us the Father, and *it is rest*. Our hearts delight to own it.

This brings us to the source of all the trial that comes, whatever may be the character of it. *A Father's* love has put us into it, whatever may seem directly or indirectly to have brought it on. How remote the trial in His case might have seemed from the Father's dealings with Him; but it is faith's title to take *nothing* any lower down than from a *Father's known love*. Then there will be something more present and real to the heart than the circumstances of the trial, namely, the One who puts us into them and the certainty of His wisdom and love in doing so—"I thank thee, O Father . . . even so, Father: for so it seemed good in thy sight."

But this leads us simply and naturally to the next character of rest, and this too was illustrated in the path of the Lord Jesus. "Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest to your souls." It is the rest we enter into by submission and obedience to the Father's will. For what was the yoke of Jesus that He bids us take upon us? It was what

we have just seen in Him—that perfect obedience that submitted itself in everything to the Father's will. It is wonderfully brought before us in the words of Isaiah l. 3–6. He who was Jehovah (ver. 3) has taken in grace the path of the learner (as the last word of verse 4 ought to be). "He learned obedience by the things which he suffered." (Heb. v. 8.) "Morning by morning he wakeneth mine ear to hear as the *learner*." Thus He can say, "The Lord God hath given me the tongue of the learned, that I should know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary." What a word in season it was to each of us, beloved brethren, when He called us to Himself to reveal to us the Father! How deeply it enhances its preciousness that He spoke it out of the experience that He had gained in His own path in the world we have to go through. Now He calls us to learn from Him, to take His yoke upon us. He, ever meek and lowly, bowed implicitly to the Father's hand in all that came upon Him. This is the one necessary condition for our enjoyment of maintained rest of soul. His rest was perfect in His path through circumstances of unparalleled trial, because His submission was perfect; and He would have us know the same perfect rest in whatever we may have to pass through, making proof that "his yoke is easy and his burden light."

To have no will of our own is the only perfect liberty. It is the working of *will* in the trial that gives it its bitterness; God has to set Himself against any working of it in us, to smash it, for our blessing. Our wilfulness has increased the trial, but at last the will is broken, and we surrender to

God. The instant we take God's part thus against ourselves, in submitting ourselves absolutely to Him, the sting is gone out of the trial. We are brought into the path of Christ, and there is the full comfort of the sympathy of Him who knew no will of His own. We could not have or expect to have His sympathy in wilfulness. We have been sanctified to the *obedience* of Christ. It is often a long and painful process in us to reduce us to it, but when once we are brought to submit to His yoke, the sense of crushing and bitterness is gone. It was the knowledge of the Father that He brought us into first, and the title we have thus to take all from *His* heart, that makes it possible and easy now to submit ourselves under His hand—"Even so, Father: for so it seemed good in thy sight."

One more character of *rest* remains. It is that presented to us in Hebrews iv. The various characters of rest we have been looking at are *present*. This is future—"There remaineth a rest to the people of God." (Ver. 9.) We are on our way to it. Believers enter into it (ver. 3), but what gives it its character is that it is "*His rest*." It is the rest of God; and it is thus developed—"He that is entered into his rest, he also hath ceased from his own works, as God did from his." (Ver. 10.) It is not the rest a soul enters into now by believing the gospel. It *remaineth* to the people of God. It is rest at the end of the path, when the work of faith, and labour of love, and patience of hope, are over. The works from which God rested were not bad works. He saw that they were "very good." He rested when His work was done, and into His rest the people of God will

enter when their works are done. Not the works of vainly seeking to establish our own righteousness, but the work and toil and energy of faith that is needed now for every step of the path of our heavenly calling. There is a sphere of rest God has; it is His own rest, where these will have place no longer.

They little knew the heart of God, who sought to bind the Lord Jesus to rest in a scene where a man was afflicted with disease for thirty-eight years. (John v.) When all was yet as fair as He made it, "He rested the seventh day from all his work which he had made;" but when sin came in with its attendant train of misery and death, all this was broken up, "My Father *worketh* hitherto, and I work"—till that wonderful work was accomplished, on the ground of which we might be introduced out of all the unrest here, into the rest of God. The rest of God is a scene suited to the heart of God for the blessing of His own, where no trace of sin or its consequences can ever be found, where no tear or breath of trial shall ever come. The danger is lest any of us should seem to come short of it, that is, by thinking of finding rest anywhere short of that of the counsels of God for us—the rest of God that remaineth for us.

The path of faith has now to be made good, step by step, with girded loin and earnest diligence of heart, through a scene every principle of which rises up to oppose us. When we are come to the rest of God, we may ungird the loin and let the heart go out upon everything. All there will only be the reflection of His glory and beauty. In the rest of God, "they rest from their labours"; but now we have to labour (or "use diligence") to enter into that rest. And

we have the word of God to be our most powerful and needed guard to detect for us, as a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart, all that would slacken our pace in pressing on through everything here, to reach the blessed scene that opens before our hearts—the bright vista of an eternal rest, the rest of God. Where God shall stand, as it were, on the threshold of a new heaven and a new earth, to wipe away all tears and every trace of the sorrow that came in by sin in the old creation. But it was in this ruined world and by the very ruin, that we have been brought to know Him who has revealed to us the Father; and where the trials and exercises of our way through it are made to yield fruit so rich in blessing for our souls. Learning then from the meek and lowly One who has trodden the path before us, laying our heads on the bosom of the Father's love, may we submit ourselves absolutely to Him, till the scene of His *ways* with us, closes for us in that of His rest and glory for ever.

HOW THE CUP RUNS OVER.

(Psa. xvi. 5; xxii.; xxiii. 5.)

In Psalm xvi. we see the Lord going before us in the path of life, giving us the perfect expression of it in Himself. It is not my object now to try and trace out all the blessed principles of the path thus displayed to us. But that word has been much on my heart, "The Lord is the portion of mine inheritance and *of my cup*." By His great grace He has made it easy for us to say the first, for in Himself is summed up all the blessedness that is before us for ever.

But now comes what tests the heart a good bit deeper. How far can we each say, He is the portion of my cup? The cup is what we are tasting on the way to the inheritance; not exactly the circumstances of the way, but our experience in them. In the Psalm it is the path of Christ, of unparalleled trial. But He could say, "the Lord is the portion of my cup." He was tasting in the circumstances what the object of His perfect trust as man—what *Jehovah* was in Himself, and was to Him: hence the wonderful words, "The lines are fallen unto me in *pleasant* places"!

Now in Psalm xxiii. He leads us into His own path, "When he putteth forth his own sheep, he goeth before them, and the sheep follow him." We have seen Him going before us in Psalm xvi.—precious study for our hearts, and necessary if we would know the way and anything of His blessed experience in it.

Now we shall see how He leads us into it. But there was a cup which came between of an altogether different character, that He alone could drink, and that made the righteous and only possible ground for our association with Him.

It is the cup of Psalm xxii.—that cup of unfathomable sorrow He prayed might pass from Him, but that in the perfection of love and obedience He gave Himself to drink, saying, "The cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?" Again, we see the cup was not the circumstances, but what He was tasting in them. What that was, our hearts can never enter into; what He entered into, that we might never. It was to be forsaken of God. Oh! the depths of suffering expressed in that cry, "My God, *my* God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Forsaken of God, and that too in the moment when, perfect in confidence, He was absolutely cast upon Him! None other had been that ever trusted in God, yet He was the only One that ever perfectly trusted in Him—now left to be perfectly abandoned of Him! But it only brings out all His perfection—"Thou art holy"; He vindicates God in doing it. Oh! think of what that must have been to Him who had Jehovah for the portion of His cup in all He had previously gone through, His only but perfect joy in a path uncheered by earthly smiles, the perfect light in which He walked amid the deep, surrounding gloom—and this gone from Him now, and in losing it to have lost everything and be shut up to utter darkness, without one ray of light left, forsaken of God who was His all. That was the cup He was drinking in Psalm xxii., till He could say, "It is finished." And in His drinking

that cup, we get the only adequate estimate of our sins and of all we were as sinners; but, blessed be God, in a work which has put them away and closed our dark history as sinners for ever.

Hence the beautiful title of the Psalm—*Aijeleth Shahar;* expressing in a strong figure of the language, "the dawn of the morning."* For that darkest night that ever was, was the dawn of an endless, cloudless day for us. "Thou *hast heard* me." (Ver. 21.) Heard from the transpiercing judgment of God due to sin, that infinite love led Him into for us, His first thought is those for whom He has endured it, those whom He has been given out of the world, that He might declare to us the *Name* in which is contained all our blessing—"I will declare thy name unto my brethren; in the midst of the assembly will I sing praise unto thee." Alone, how infinitely alone, in the darkness for us, He can now associate us with Himself, no longer alone, in the light into which He has entered. Alone in the sorrow, He has us with Him in the joy, and *sings* out of the fulness of it; but it is "in the midst of the assembly," now associated with Him in the joy.

Thus it is that He can lead us into His path as in Psalm xxiii. But now comes a process needed to be passed through in all our souls, that we should be able to say, "my cup runneth over." This is not the experience of the first part of the Psalm. There in being able to say, "the Lord is my Shepherd," it is easy to add "I shall not *want*." Accordingly we find the Shepherd's *care* expressed in the green pastures

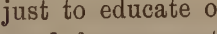
* Literally "the hind of the morning"—not the gradual break of day, but the *leaping* in of it, after such a night.

and still waters of His providing, that the soul thus *invigorated* (for this is the meaning of "restore," as food or rest restores) may walk in the paths of righteousness for His name's sake. But in the latter part of the Psalm there is a marked change. The green pastures and waters of rest are no longer present to the soul, but the valley of the *shadow of death*. This is commonly taken to mean our death-bed. Practically the experience of this part of the Psalm is often only reached upon a death-bed. But it ought not to be so; and that it is not the thought of the passage may be clear from the words, "surely goodness and mercy shall follow me *all the days of my life*."

There is a greater death than ours to hearts that know the Lord. Surely it is the shadow of *His* death, the death of Psalm xxii., that lies upon the whole scene of this world. The world in which our Lord was crucified is the valley of the shadow of death. Oh! for hearts to be more affected by His death. How far has the whole scene here closed for us, enwrapped in the shadow of that greatest death of all? What is there then left for us? "THOU art with me." It is the *Shepherd Himself*, proved more to the heart than all His precious care. *He* is more than all He can give. When the soul reaches this in its growth, shut up to *Himself* in a world closed to it by His cross, it is not merely that "I shall not want," but "my cup *runneth over*." He has brought us into the reality and blessedness of His own experience! He Himself who once as man on earth could say, "the Lord is the portion of my cup," now fills that cup to overflowing for us.

How little many souls know that the things on which their hearts are leaning, as though they were essential to their joy, are only enfeebling if not hindering any real experience of it. It is when all else is gone and Christ alone remains before the heart as its all, that the cup runs over. This is the secret of many a happy *death*. But the Lord would have us entering into as the experience of our *life*. Sooner or later each soul must be brought to it. Either when death comes to wrest from the grasp all that divided the heart with Him, or else when *His* death does it far more effectually; and deep blessed *soul* satisfaction is found, where only it can be found, in the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus our Lord. When brought to *have* nothing but Christ, the soul finds it *wants* nothing but Him. The Epistle to the Philippians gives us the beautiful expression of this as the normal experience of the Christian.

May we know each one for ourselves, beloved brethren, what it is to have His death so close everything here for our hearts that we may be shut up to Himself, to find Him the deep abounding portion of our cup, whatever our circumstances. Then will our path be bright to His praise till we see His face and dwell in the Father's house for ever. All His ways with us here are just to educate our souls for this, that, in being weaned from everything that is not Himself, in the valley of the shadow of death we may find our cup overflow in "*Thou* art with me." It is the joy of eternity begun now. In His presence is the fulness of it for ever.



GOD WITH US. GOD FOR US. GOD IN US.

(Matt. i. 21-23; Rom. viii. 31-34; 1 John iii. 24.)

These passages are linked together naturally for all our hearts, and I may say divinely. We find in them God *with* us, God *for* us, and God *in* us; lastly, we get the fullest, deepest result of all this manifestation of God in privilege—where we are brought by it: we dwell in God.

First, there is Emmanuel, God with us; a more wonderful sight than that which attracted Moses in the wilderness, when he turned aside to see the bush that burned with fire and yet was not consumed, and when God called to him out of the midst of the bush—a sight infinitely more wonderful, and yet the world passes on unmoved, indifferent to such a Presence; the same world to-day that had no room for Him in its inn—His first resting-place a manger, His last a sepulchre; and what came in between? "God was in Christ," shewing forth all His grace, the manner of His coming into it so characteristic of the grace in which He came; the only answer of our hearts to all, "Away with him; crucify him, crucify him." The deliberate choice of men was, "Not this man, but Barabbas," the name signifying "Son of Abba," Satan's counterfeit, a robber and a murderer; that is what suited the world. But how wonderful to

think of it! How blessed the grace that God should come into it knowing it to be such! Was ever an ambassage of peace more manifestly declared than in the way He came? He might have shone into the rebel world in all the majesty of His glory. Who could have borne His presence? It would have been our destruction. But no! He veils the glory of His Person in the lowly garb of humanity. In human weakness He is born into the world. What more perfect expression of it than a babe? Yet it is thus we see this wonderful manifestation of God—nay, God Himself manifested: "the Word of God," "the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us;" "God was manifest in the flesh." All the fulness of the Godhead was pleased to dwell in that lowly Babe.

But there were two sides to this wonderful coming in of Emmanuel. We may look at His presence here, as the last of a long series of tests to which man (in Israel) had been subjected, to bring out to himself, that is, to us each, the full truth of our condition.

God had given promises; they were despised. Then the law was given by the disposition of angels; it was broken before ever it was brought into the camp. Prophets were raised up; they were persecuted and slain who "shewed before of the coming of the Just One; of whom" (as Stephen tells us, who gives us this inspired summary of God's ways) "ye have been now the betrayers and murderers." Or, as it is in the Lord's parable that brings us to the same point, "Having yet therefore one son, his well-beloved, he sent him also last unto them, saying, They will reverence my son. But those husbandmen

said among themselves, This is the heir; come, let us kill him . . . and they took him, and killed him, and cast him out of the vineyard"—the last answer of our hearts to the last test God had to apply to them —the solemn proof, not merely of individual acts by which we were guilty, but of a condition in which we were all alike involved, and were *lost*. This is one aspect of the presence of Emmanuel, and more especially brought before us in the last three gospels, needed as it is to bring into our souls the full conviction of our total ruin. But there is another side of the truth: it comes before us fully in the Gospel of John. *It opens with the result* of all the previous testing. "He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not. He came unto his own, and his own received him not." God Himself has come into the world, and "God is love." If He is here, then, we shall find perfect love. But He is light also, so that we shall find perfect light in His presence, too. Yes, the full *light* of all that God is in *love* revealed and shining. But "the light shineth in darkness, and the darkness comprehended it not." Morally there is found what is physically impossible; the tiniest ray of morning light *dispels* the darkness of the night. But here the shining of the light has no effect whatever, it shines *in darkness*. The darkness remains as profound, as intense as ever, totally unaffected by it. But what brought in the light but infinite love? Then it has not come simply to shine, shewing out the full character of the darkness. As surely as divine love has come into this lost world it has come to work, to bring in the light to transpierce the conscience, to lay bare the

heart, to reveal us to ourselves and thus to reveal God to us.

We see a beautiful illustration of this wonderful work of divine love in John iv. Who sits by the side of the well wearied with His journey? God has stooped down to human weariness, weakness and even thirst. And now He becomes beholden (at least He asks—for we do not know that He ever got it) to a poor creature for a drink of water, Himself the Creator of every spring and source in this world. Why was He there? That He might reveal her to herself, and shine on in the revelation of God Himself to her soul. But having set her at ease in His presence by *asking* a drink of her, He goes on to open out what He came to *give*. "If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith unto thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldst have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water." (John iv. 10.) But no ray of spiritual intelligence is there to answer to *such* communications, "the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God." (1 Cor. ii. 14.) She talks of the well, its depth, of how Jacob gave it to them, and drank thereof himself, his children, and his cattle. That is all she makes of these richest divine and heavenly things of His grace. Patiently He waits upon her ignorance and goes on to unfold more fully to her the living water that He gives, but with as little effect. We can see, indeed, that she is attracted by the lowly condescension of the supposed Jew in speaking to her, a woman of Samaria, and in spite of seeming impossibility His word carries authority and is not discredited. "Sir, give me this water." Solemn it is to see that there

may be all this and no real divine work in the soul. What then must still be done if this heart is to be won for God? He turns the light in upon her conscience. "Go, call thy husband, and come hither." How intelligent she becomes all in a moment. "Sir, I perceive that thou art a prophet." She is herself searched out in the presence of One who knows her life, her sin-stained history; nothing in her heart is hid from the One with whom she has to do; God is present in perfect love to bring it out, as perfectly as it would have had to come out in the day of judgment. She does not go away from Him, like Adam, to seek a hiding-place in the trees of the garden. Light is doing its own solemn work, convicting her of nothing but sin; but love that *makes the light* binds her to the spot where she is convicted, that He may reveal Himself as nothing but love to the poor sinner. She makes one little effort to parry the blow that was telling in her conscience. If she had no religion of her own to boast in, at least "Our *fathers* worshipped in this mountain; and ye say, that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship." How natural it is—how often to be met with! That when truth is working this question of a place of worship is raised by the soul ill at ease under the effect of it. But how unreal! What did He want with her worship? He had come to seek, not hers, but her. When sought and found and infinitely blessed, and all the need of conscience and heart met and satisfied, then would be the time of worship; not till then. Jesus delivers her from this blind of Satan and judges all the hollow, false religion of the flesh's efforts by one little word, "Woman, believe me, the hour cometh,

when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the *Father*." Worship flows from the formed relationship of children. "The Father seeketh such to worship him." Well may He have it then! He never sought aught from us until He had given all that His love could give, and we had our place before Him according to the perfection of what He gave.

Thus we see God manifested, not in the majesty of His glory, that would have repelled us, but bringing near the light even into our own consciences, that He may shine into them in all the fulness of His love. There is no real work of God at all in the soul till the conscience is reached, and I am found out in all I have done in the presence of God, whose light is shining on *me*, whose heart is bent upon having *me*.

We might go from scene to scene in the gospels and never have exhausted this infinite subject of the ways of divine love, winning the heart to confide in Him, that divine light might search the conscience, and bring us into the truth as to ourselves and as to God. But if the truth be that I am guilty and lost in my sins, how can I be at rest in the presence of a holy God? This brings us to the second great part of our subject expressed in the verse read in Romans viii., "God *for* us." It is the summing up of the work that has been wrought *for* us to meet all the need of our condition, as the epistle unfolds both to us. When the effect of the presence of God has been to bring out in us, in our consciences, that we were only fit to be cast out of His presence for ever, we find Him giving His Son to accomplish the work for us, that puts us into the

presence of God at perfect rest because in righteousness. And we find God, whom we thought was against us because we were against Him, proved in not sparing His Son, to be for us. True, He had given Himself to carry out this work, as it is written in the volume of the book, "Lo, I come. I delight to do thy will, O my God." (Psa. xl. 7.) And we have seen Him in the lowly path of its accomplishment when the heavens opened over Him, and the Father's voice declared, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." But "He *spared not* his own Son, but delivered him up for us all." Nothing short of such a sacrifice could meet the exigencies of our lost condition, according to the glory of God. But see how perfectly this work of Christ has done it.

What words are heard in Paul's—the chief of sinners—lips? "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect?" What a challenge to all the ingenuity of Satan to bring up one single sin to charge against the believer. Will Satan take up the challenge? Can anything be found against us before God? Impossible! "It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again." What makes the challenge so unanswerable is that the God against whom we have sinned is the very One who gave Him thus to answer for all our guilt. As surely as we have been convicted of having nothing but sins, of *being* nothing but guilty and lost sinners, it is all for us. He "was delivered for our offences." There He met the charge of them; the Judge Himself come down from the throne of judgment in infinite grace, He took His place at the bar where we stood as poor,

guilty, convicted sinners in conscience. Bearing our sins in His own body on the tree, He met the charge of them, enduring the judgment of divine holiness and righteousness against sin, so as infinitely to glorify God and to bring out God's character in holiness and righteousness against sin as it never had been manifested before, in perfect love, too. And when the work was done, "He was raised for our justification." Thus we have a risen Christ in the glory of God as our justification. Has the eye that has been opened on self and sins turned away to Jesus? Have we seen Him by faith as the One who endured the judgment of God to the infinite depths of the sorrow expressed in His cry, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" "It is finished." And now God has attested that cry from the glory. He was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father. We believe on Him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead, and a risen Christ in the glory of God as our justification fills the eye of faith instead of sins or self any more.

But the blessedness and security of it all to the soul is the more enhanced, when we see that it is not simply Paul, but God Himself that lays down this challenge—God who, as it were, thus calls attention to the absolute way in which He Himself, against whom all our sins have been, has justified us beyond the possibility of charge.

Still, even this does not bring out the full force of the wonderful words. They are quoted from Isaiah l. 8, "He is near that justifieth me. . . . . Who is he that shall condemn me?" The preceding verses leave no doubt as to who is the speaker; it is Christ

Himself who, having put Himself thus in the believer's place to bear his sins and endure their judgment, now stands out of it all to raise the question, Can aught of all that was once laid to His account be now found against Him? God has justified the absolute perfection of His work by raising Him from the dead; who is he that shall condemn Christ? "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus." Faith can take up the very words of Christ—nay, the Holy Ghost makes them our own. If it is impossible that one charge can be brought against Christ, it is impossible that it can be brought against us. We are in Him who came up out of the depths of the condemnation He went into for us, and where He made an end, not merely of our sins, but of us who sinned—not of the fruit only, but of the root that produced it (Rom. viii. 3), and we are in all the impossibility of condemnation for Christ. He once identified Himself in grace with our position in sins and judgment, and now the feeblest believer is identified with Him in the whole of His position as the risen Christ before God though here in Romans this is mainly applied to the more negative aspects of our forgiveness and deliverance from sin's power. But how full and complete the answer of divine love to all the need that the light disclosed of our guilty sins and state of sin, and in which God has been proved for us, and the only measure of His love that He spared not His own Son. "How shall he not with him also freely give us all things?" and, "If God be for us, who can be against us?"

We get one more aspect of this wonderful revela-

tion of God to our souls in 1 John iii. 24, "God dwelleth in us." So again in chapter iv. 12. We know the words that introduce this last passage, and what is connected with them in the first chapter of the gospel. There, if "no man hath seen God at any time; the only-begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him;" here the same truth is expressed, but it is added, "If *we love* one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us." In the gospel the Son reveals God according to His perfect knowledge of Him as the Father, in whose bosom as Son He dwells. It is the perfect revelation of God in His own nature, perfectly manifested in the Son. Here, "if we love one another," *God* is love—we have been born of Him, and thus partake of His nature and know Him. The children that have been born of God are known by the characteristic traits of the nature of which they partake, when set free by the deliverance of the cross to express that nature. God wrought in His grace, as we have seen, to convict our souls of our sins by the inshining of His truth upon us. And we received Jesus, we believed in His name, we were born, "not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God;" "of his own will begat he us by the word of truth." It was the first blessed work of God, a work *in* us essential to any discernment of divine things. But this was not peace, but the full awakening of our souls to the need of it. Our need was met, and far more, by the work of the Son of God wrought *for* us, outside every question of what we were, save that we were guilty and lost in our sins—God Himself proved for us, to our full justification, in

righteousness, from every charge that could be brought against us. Now this work for us, in which all divine love has been manifested towards us, so that there are no new depths of divine love to be revealed (see chap. iv. 9, 10), is assumed as the basis of the Epistle of John as well as the work in us. "I write unto you, little children, because your sins *are forgiven you* for His name's sake." (1 John ii. 12.) Hence even the babes of God's family possess the Holy Ghost (chap. ii. 20), for His presence dwelling in us is ever the seal of the faith that believes God's testimony to the accomplished work of the cross expressed in this forgiveness. The babes, too—these babes of John's epistle—know the Father. (Ver. 13.) Thus, while the object of the epistle is to instruct us as to the eternal life we possess in the Son of God, that we may know it and know we have it, and as to the nature of that life, those who possess it are not looked at otherwise than as in the full christian condition, of which the blessed Spirit of God dwelling in us is the seal and power. It was not enough that we should possess the nature of God, but that nature in us must be set free from the dominion of sin by faith of our death with Christ, and in power by the Holy Ghost dwelling in us, in order that it should be displayed in its own characteristic traits where it was once displayed in all its perfection in Christ—"which thing is true in him and in you." "If we love one another, God dwelleth in us," not simply as Christ become our life, but the Holy Ghost, too, given us. And inasmuch as "the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given us," it can be added, "and his love is perfected

in us." Our hearts may be but poor tiny vessels to contain it, but the love cannot be less than itself, the love of God in all its fulness, and this is shed in us as surely as the Holy Ghost has been given us—God dwelling in us. "And hereby we know that he dwells in us, by the Spirit which he hath given us" (chap. iii. 24)—the power of the manifestation of His nature in us, that nothing but God and what is of God may shine out in us.

But this wondrous fact of His grace, amazing truth, become absolute to our souls by the possession of His nature that loves, and the Holy Ghost as the power of it—God Himself in us—is not all, but leads to what is the deepest, richest privilege of our souls in infinite and everlasting blessing—"we dwell in God." God Himself has become the refuge, and shelter, and hiding-place, and known home of our hearts. What unspeakable rest, what calm, undisturbed repose of heart, what unfathomable depths of joy are found in what is thus made known to us! Impossible if God did not dwell in us, yet going beyond this, as the effect of it, and thus more connected with the practical state. But first, as to the privilege itself, "Hereby know we that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit"—not, mark, simply now "by the Spirit which he hath given us" (as in chap. iii. 24), but "*of his* Spirit," expressing that the Spirit who dwells in us is His Spirit, so that we might understand we share His own Spirit, and thus know and enter into, in a way more intimate than with any man, the mind and thoughts and heart of God. "Truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus

Christ." The immediate effect is, therefore, that "we have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world"; we enter into the joy found for God in such a testimony, and are impelled to have part in the testimony itself. It is the deepest conceivable expression of divine communion—inconceivable save to faith and by the power of the Holy Ghost, and as the effect of God dwelling in us. But being communion, it is much more connected with our practical state. Hence we find, as the practical conditions of it, "he that *keepeth his commandments* dwelleth in him" (chap. iii. 24), and "he *that dwelleth in love* dwelleth in God, and God in him." (Chap. iv. 16.)

These are the two great principles of the christian life, seen in the Lord Jesus Christ, obedience and love; these made up His life, and were the path of that life as manifested in all its perfection in Him. "The prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me," He could say, "but that the world may know that *I love* the Father, and *as the Father gave me commandment*, even so I do." (John xiv. 30, 31.) He is our life, hence it is the test of true abiding in Him that we walk as He walked. (1 John ii. 6.) Our hearts condemn us the instant we do not, and confidence in God is hindered. If God is love, how could we dwell in God if we did not dwell in love? And love, as we have seen and known so well for our own souls, is active. How cold and withered up hearts are when love is not active, going out to all the family of God, God's first circle of interest, embracing all that are His, seeking their blessing, and to serve and give up self for my brother. Then

again, there is the world lying without, but not outside the activity of His love, nor of ours to whom He has given of His Spirit. There is freshness when His love is active in us. It is the atmosphere in which He dwells—and we, too, if we dwell in love. Any infringement of love is the absolute hindrance of such dwelling. But oh, what incentive to love we possess—it was "not that we loved him, but that he loved us." "We love him, because he first loved us." And now we possess the very nature of Him who so loved us. How blessed to be seeking to express it! But the deep spring is in Him, and abiding in Him it is impossible but that it should flow out. And as we dwell in love we dwell in God.

This is one side of the life, the other is obedience. We are sanctified to the obedience of Christ; abiding in Him, this, too, will be expressed in us. It is the necessary test of the love as to whether it be true divine love and no other. "This is the love of God, that we keep his commandments." It is the only path of liberty and joy to have no will but His. His commandments perfectly expressed this life in Him, that they are now given to form and direct, in His blessed ways, in us. His life was only and absolutely the obedience of love, and He is our life; how could it be anything else in us? Keeping His commandments we dwell in God. Reserve a corner in the heart for self-pleasing, doing our own will, and there is none. How could there be? The heart condemns us, "and if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things." His estimate of aught that hinders the heart's confidence before Him is far deeper than ours.

Truly we have been brought to the springs and sources of everlasting joy in being brought to dwell in God. There can be nothing beyond it for ever. It may be all ours to enjoy now. And this leads me to what is important, for it may be said, You speak of what is not for me. Only such as are far advanced in the divine life can know such privileges as these. How blessed the answer to such workings of unbelief when we hear Him say, "*Whosoever* shall confess that Jesus is [not the Christ merely, though whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born—truly born of God—but] the Son of God"—that is, in the full glory of His Person as known in Christianity, known now that the Holy Ghost is come, and we know Him in the Father—"God dwelleth in him, and he in God." All belongs to each dear simple child of God, to the very youngest and feeblest that has been brought to the full knowledge of the glory of the Son of God. But shall we be content that it is ours in grace? Or shall we not rather now seek earnestly the path of His life in love and obedience, for the little while we are waiting for Him, so that we may prove in our souls the rest and joy beyond all that can be expressed, of dwelling in God, and God in us. What nearness, what intimacy of communion is involved in it, what a retreat for the soul amid the storm and conflict here—God Himself become our hiding-place and home of our hearts before the glory! May nothing short of the abiding realisation of it satisfy us. Let us seek practical nearness to God, that we may know Him better in ever-deepening blessedness, according to the wonderful revelation He has given us of Himself, as God with us, for us, in us, that we may dwell in Him.

"WHERE DWELLEST THOU?"

(JOHN I. 33-39.)

THERE are two great parts in the wonderful revelation God has given us of Himself. There is, first—and it is of first importance to us—He reveals Himself; for how else should we know Him? "Canst thou by searching find out God?" We had lost every true thought of Him from Eden, so early had Satan poisoned the very springs of our being against God—"having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God," as the effect of sin—the mind of the flesh, enmity against Him. But the moment was come at last when the heart of God, long yearning to tell itself out in this ruined world, was to have its full suited expression. This we are brought to in John i.: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." Blessed thought for us!—there has been from eternity with God, the Word that could perfectly express Him; "and the Word was God," for who but God could express God? For a moment we are introduced to the vast scene of the display of His eternal power and Godhead in creation (ver. 3), but this only to be dismissed in a word, to give way before what was infinitely greater, even the divine Word, the Creator Himself, come into the world that He had made, albeit to be unknown in it. Yes, it was even so, for "the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us"—God manifest in the flesh; and the opened eye of

faith "beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father—full of grace and truth." For this was the character of His coming: "the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ. No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him."

Thus the light of all that God is, fully revealed, had risen upon this dark world. With what effect? Oh! has it to be told? None whatever, if left to itself! Such is man, such the total ruin that sin has made of us, that what is impossible physically takes place. "The light shineth *in* darkness." Perfect light was there; the darkness remained as it was, "the darkness comprehended it not." Such the profound moral darkness in which we lay! This the complete, awful proof of it: He was in the world, and the world knew Him not: He came unto His own, and His own received Him not. Do we not know and own it as our guilt and ruin? Have we not had to prove it in our own souls? *We* saw no beauty in Him that we should desire Him. But mark the wondrous grace in the character of the revelation. The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us. "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself." He who was in the form of God emptied Himself, and took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men. He veiled His Godhead glory in the lowly garb of manhood that He might bring down all the grace that was in God, right down to us where we were in all our need of it, to draw us by the very *grace* thus revealed into the discovered *truth* of our condition. Had the light

come only to shine, we should have been left where we were, lost for ever. Blessed be God, it is not so. If light is come, love is come with it, for God is love as well as light. And love is active to bring in the rays of the light into our consciences and hearts that, being brought to know ourselves, we may know Him. Thus in connection with the revelation of all that He is the work of sovereign grace is brought in that any heart might open to Him. (Ver. 13.)

Nor was the *fact* of an activity of divine love any new thing in itself in this poor world. God must needs have ever wrought that there might be anything of Him, of blessing, or of good, found in it. Only all comes out clearly in the light now, and we see what the first essential work of all is, and what its character. "As many as received him, to them gave he right to become the children of God (a place, therefore, that the saints had not before), even to them that believe in his name: which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." When the darkness of our condition was wholly unaffected by the presence of infinite light, when there was no heart to answer to the infinite love that brought it here, God wrought in that love, applying His word by the power of the Spirit, as ever the blessed instrument of this work—that born of God, in divinely given faith, our poor hearts might open to receive Jesus, and that we might possess a nature capable of answering to, and (when set free) delighting in all that was presented to us in Him. Oh, think of the wonderful grace that wrought, when there was nothing in any of our hearts that answered to anything in His, to make us partake

by faith of His own nature, that we might have capacity to know and joy in Him for ever! But this blessed joy is not the first effect of being born of God —far from it. There must be the bringing out between the conscience and God of our sins, as we never knew them before, that they might never have to come out in the day of judgment. Sooner or later self must be learned, too, to be nothing but sin. Thus we find ourselves out before God in the only truth of our condition—a condition that makes us *totally unfit for His presence.* What a place to be brought to, solemn and humbling, yet needed; and that is the sure mark, as it is the effect of a work all His own. We are brought at last where Peter was in principle, as in Luke v., "he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord"—blessed taking of God's side against himself, as it was; but *not to be left there.* No; that never would have satisfied divine love. More was needed for God's own glory—more to give us rest in His presence. The answer to both is found in the glories in which the Lord Jesus is presented to us in the testimony of John the Baptist. But this brings us to the second great part of the way God is revealed, namely—to the divine *work* in all its completeness, by which we are put into the presence of His glory at perfect rest. We find it brought out in the verses before us, if not actually accomplished, yet at least in the glory of Him whose work it is, and the work part of His glory. How suited and exquisite the grace that, amid this full testimony to all the various glory of the divine Word as manifested on earth, we should find the complete work as an essential part of

that glory, that was necessary if we were to have any part in it for blessing!

There are two parts of this divine work, and they are brought out in further testimony to His glory: first, "Behold the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world," and secondly, "He it is that baptizes with the Holy Ghost." These two parts of the work of the Son of God, which lay the foundation of, as they characterise, Christianity, are needed to be added to the primary work of the Spirit through the Word, by which souls were ever born anew, to complete the full position of the Christian according to the purpose of God. In the precious blood of the Lamb of God, foreordained before the foundation of the world, but now for the first time manifested, we find the righteous ground of all the work of God in blessing that there ever had been, or could be, in a lost world. He is here presented according to all the perfection found in Him as the Lamb of God, and therefore in the full, complete efficacy of the work, even to the clearing away of sin for ever—in a new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness. Of that first part of His work He could say, "Now is the Son of man glorified, and God is glorified in him; and if God be glorified in him, God shall also glorify him in himself." And again: "I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do." So that, where God rests in the full settlement of every question of sin, as it affected His glory, there we rest in seeing our sins gone in His death who bore them, and we ourselves judged, condemned and crucified with Him. It needed, indeed, the whole glory of the

work that lays the foundation of the new heavens and new earth to remove the stain of a single sin from our guilty souls; but it is there, and now an accomplished work for us; so that the moment the eye of faith turns from self, found out in its sin, to the Lamb of God, the scene is cleared for us, as it is for God, of all we have done and been. It lay in the perfection and glory of His work as the Lamb of God, to end all that was of the first Adam for faith, in infinitely executed judgment, and to lay the basis, in divine righteousness, for the accomplishment of all God's counsels, for His glory and our blessing, in the last Adam. Thus the end of all flesh is come for faith before God, and the self that was unfit for His presence is gone with the guilt that belonged to it, in the depths of the judgment He entered into for us.

But this brings us to the second part of the work of the Son of God, as He who baptizeth with the Holy Ghost. It is all here still wrapped up in testimony to the glory of His Person. But we know it as accomplished. Having finished His work as the atoning Lamb of God, He has taken His place as the accepted Man in the glory of God, and sent down the Holy Ghost. He is given to dwell within us, as each one receives the testimony of accomplished redemption, to bring us in power into the whole of the new place He has taken as Man, before that glory. He baptizes with the Holy Ghost. It is no longer the mere negative taking away of the man whose condition had been brought to an end in God's judgment, but the full, positive bringing in of a wholly new condition for man, in Christ risen, beyond

death and judgment. Not till, in fact, the work of redemption was accomplished could the Holy Ghost be given; "for the Holy Ghost was not yet, because Jesus was not yet glorified." And so, in the same order as to the faith of our souls, "In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, *the gospel of your salvation:* in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise." (Comp. Acts xix. 1–6; Eph. i. 13.) Given immediately upon, and the seal of, the faith that believes God's testimony to the accomplished work of a risen and glorified Christ, the Holy Ghost gives us the consciousness of our new and wonderful place in Christ. This testimony is conveyed to us in the forgiveness of sins. Hence it is at the point at which we receive the positive and conferred forgiveness of our sins, that we receive the Holy Ghost to dwell in us. Compare Acts ii. 38; x. 43, 44, and the place of the introduction of the Holy Ghost in the Epistle to the Romans, after peace with God through justification—"the love of God shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us." (Chap. v. 5.) Also in type, in the case of the leper (Lev. xiv. 14–18), where the oil (type of the Holy Ghost) follows the application of the blood of the trespass-offering.

Thus, when the Holy Ghost was come, Jesus says, "Ye shall know that I am in the Father, and ye in me, and I in you." When He had made peace through the blood of His cross, and became Himself the first messenger of it to His disciples, in John xx., greeting them with, "Peace be unto you," as the last Adam, a quickening Spirit, He breathed on them, and said, "Receive ye the Holy Ghost." It is the

Spirit as the power of the life with which He was risen from the dead, rather than given as a distinct Person to dwell in them. For this we know they had still to wait till the day of Pentecost. The Son of God was come, "that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly." The Spirit is the power of that life now possessed in a wholly new way, as it never existed before, in the risen Christ. Hence it can be said, "the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death" (Rom. viii. 2), a positive, actual deliverance, by faith of the operation of God who hath raised Him from the dead. Further, He is the Spirit of adoption; if we are the sons of God by faith in Christ Jesus (Gal. iii. 26), *because* we are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, Abba, Father. (Chap. iv. 6.) Another blessed mark and effect of His presence is stated in 2 Corinthians iii. 17: "Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty"—liberty to gaze on the unveiled glory of God in the face of Jesus, which is the token of God's perfect acceptance of the work according to which we are accepted before Him in righteousness, that, as we gaze, we may be changed into His image. There is also another wonderful range of corporate effects of the gift of the Holy Ghost, as dwelling on earth and in the believer, uniting us to Christ; but these do not come within the scope of the Gospel of John, and it is profitable for our souls to distinguish the individual aspect of the baptism of the Holy Ghost from that which is corporate, for we must be established in the former before anything of the latter can be known in privilege and responsibility.

Thus the main elements that go to make up the christian position, individually looked at, are before us, brought out in the glory of His Person, and that too in the order of the work that brings us into it. First, life, and with it comes the conviction of our sins, for "the life was the light of men"; secondly, the blood of the cross, and a full and everlasting forgiveness by it; and lastly, the Holy Ghost, seal of the faith that believes God's testimony to it, that we may be established in Christ in our full position. Of course the work was not yet accomplished; it was only found in the testimony borne to the glory of His Person, save the present actual work of divine quickening going on, that any might receive Him. But all has been accomplished now.

What a salvation it is! How slow our poor hearts are to take in the greatness of the blessing, and the glory of God involved in it! All the divine fulness was pleased to dwell in Him, *God* thus revealed *in man before men.* Then He takes His place as *man made sin before God* on the cross, to take it away according to the exigencies of God's own glory and of our discovered condition. Next, as the consequence of the work so gloriously accomplished, we see *man in Christ in the glory of God* in divine righteousness, and the Holy Ghost sent down to dwell in the believer, putting him in power into that place—complete in Christ before the Godhead's fulness. And if we are in Him, He is in us. So that in wonderful answering responsibility, nothing but *Christ* as our life should be *seen in us before the world.* Such the amazing effect and necessary consequence for the believer of the glory of

His Person and work as here testified to, when all was accomplished.

But now we come to what may well challenge our hearts as to the practical effect upon us of the infinite grace made known to us in such a Saviour and salvation. For it is just at this point in the testimony that we have an historical incident of surpassing interest brought in. These incidents are not many in the gospel, and always introduced to illustrate the doctrine in hand. Beautifully in keeping with the form of the truth in the minor divisions of the book, it opens with a scene that illustrates its doctrine as a whole. "Two disciples of John heard him speak, and they followed Jesus." Blessed effect of the truth in power reaching the soul, too often lacking with us! And they followed Him, not for anything more that they could get from Him, but with a divinely created longing His presence alone could satisfy. And, oh! what it tells of the manner of the love displayed in God come into this world in Christ! So completely had He won the confidence of these two hearts in attracting them to Himself, that their one object that first day they ever knew Him, is to find out where He dwells that they may dwell with Him. This first precious fruit of His grace, as He turned and saw them following, is sweet to the Lord, in a cold, heartless world, and He simply draws out the expression of it by His question, "What seek ye?" Has that question any application to us, beloved brethren? We rest in the wonderful position we have been established in. It is well. It is the basis of any proper fruit of Christianity. But what are we seeking? For let not our hearts be deceived into thinking

that we are seeking nothing. It is impossible. The heart was made for an object, and a *personal* object, and nothing but a divine one can satisfy it, so that if we are not seeking Christ we are assuredly seeking something that is not Christ. Ah! is not this the secret of so much failure, of so little brightness and power of christian life, of so little true testimony for Him in separation from the world, where there is no question as to our place and acceptance in Christ? we have known so little of Christ as the heart's undivided object. Not so could these disciples know their place; but thus early in their knowledge of Him they were bent on one thing, "Where dwellest thou?" And the Lord accepts and ratifies the desire, as of His own awakening in their hearts, "Come and see." "He satisfieth the longing soul."

Thus, at the opening, and as it were the frontispiece of the book, we see the awakening of a need in the soul, to which the Gospel of John begins to supply the answer. The other gospels tell us that if the foxes had holes and the birds of the air their nests, the Son of man, Creator of all, had not where to lay His head in the world He created. But John is the revelation of the heavenly home of the Son of God. He dwells in the bosom of the Father. He has come to reveal the depths of the love in which He dwells that we may find our home now in spirit, and for ever, there with Him where He finds His. It was just what these two disciples, if there were but two, were drawn after Him to seek. Oh, to know more of the simple power of such an attraction! What would more blessedly prepare the way and educate the soul for heavenly association with Himself as our dis-

pensed position in Christianity, to which this gospel is the divinely perfect moral introduction? In the light of what follows in it, "Come and see" is really the invitation to look into heaven now, and become familiar with it as His home and ours.

This testimony of heavenly things comes very early. Only, going before, there is the earthly testimony of the need of our condition in view of the heavenly things about to be introduced, "Ye must be born again!" for so the Lord characterises the solemn truth that Nicodemus ought to have known from Old Testament scriptures. "If I have told you *earthly* things, and ye believe not, how shall ye believe, if I tell you of heavenly things?" The Son of man had come down from heaven to tell of that heavenly scene He knew so well—"the Son of man who *is in heaven*," even when thus testifying of it on earth. (Chap. iii. 12, 13.) "He that cometh from heaven is above all. And what he hath seen and heard, that he testifieth; and no man receiveth his testimony." Still there *was* this testimony and grace working, as we have seen, that we might receive it—the Father drawing to the Son, that when we come, we may find the Son revealing the Father, as only the Son can, and as He came to make Him known in special character as the Son who dwells in His bosom. "No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him." Thus when the time was come (the testimony of His words and works being rejected) that He should leave the world and go to the Father, He leads the thoughts of His people to the Father's house for the first time in

scripture (chap. xiv.), He can say, "Whither I go ye know;" as though He would say, You know heaven quite well; the Father's house is no strange place to you. How can it be possible? Philip seizes the truth, so far at least that the Father's presence must make all the blessedness of the Father's house, and he asks, "Shew us the Father, and it sufficeth us," but only to shew how far he had been from discerning the proper glory of the Lord Jesus, as of the only-begotten Son with the Father: "Have I been so long time with you, and hast thou not known me, Philip? he that hath seen me hath seen the Father.... Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me?" His words and works, all that He was, were the revelation of the Father, so that however little hearts entered into it then or now, there had been revealed and shining out in Him morally here, every characteristic trait of the divine and everlasting blessedness of heaven.

Nor was this all. He whose presence here had been the revelation of a place so new to the thoughts of His people, was now going to take His place as man, as the revealed and known centre of all the joy and blessedness and glory of that place. For "I go to prepare a place for you"—Himself the home-link, so intimate and precious, of their and our hearts with the place, as His going there was all the preparation possible or needed, to give us our place there in spirit with Him, till He comes to receive us to Himself. Hence the word never speaks of our going to heaven, but to Christ. The person makes the place, even in natural things, how much more in divine!

But there was more in His heart for us—more that we needed to connect us in power with the place thus revealed to us. He had been the manifestation in His own Person when here of all that makes heaven what it is for ever. He has gone to take His place there as the One who loved us and gave Himself for us, that our hearts might follow Him there, as to their own familiar home to dwell with Him. And now from that home of love and joy and glory He has sent the Holy Ghost to be the power of our association with Him in it, and thus of our enjoyment of such heavenly blessedness. (Chap. xiv. 16-20.) How full and blessed an answer to the awakened longing of the soul, "Where dwellest thou?"—the "Come and see" of Jesus in answer to it, that we may "abide with him." Only one thing more remains for which we have still to wait, and the promise comes in to meet the heart as nothing else now could, Christ being so known: "I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also." Thus we have before us in this gospel the richest elements, morally and divinely, that go to form a heavenly people upon earth, left here to express what is heavenly, and thus only truly to represent a rejected, heavenly Christ, while waiting for Him.

When the work was finished and the Lord Jesus was glorified, and the Holy Ghost was come to make known and put us in power into the glorious effects of it, as revealed through Paul, we find this expressed as the normal christian condition in privilege and responsibility. "As is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly." We are constituted such by the grace that has called us to Himself. Nor is it

without the revelation of a new sphere suited to the heavenly life and nature with its new affections, capacities and desires, which we have received. If the prophet is quoted, that "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him," it is to contrast with this former state of things that which is true now in Christianity. "But God *hath* revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the depths of God." It is of immense practical importance to our souls then to see that there is no new element of blessing and joy in the eternal glory, none that has not been already revealed, and the Spirit who revealed them is our capacity in the divine nature we possess, to enjoy what is revealed. Not that there will not be increased power of enjoyment. For now the power of the Spirit, so often diverted to negativing the flesh ("that we might not do the things that we would"), will then be for ever only the unhindered power of our enjoyment of these heavenly things. There is our condition in the body too to be taken into account. "Now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known." "In this tabernacle we groan, being burdened:" we are like birds in a cage that long to be free to soar into our own native air. But admitting all this and the vast difference of our condition when glorified like Christ, all the things we shall live in and find our joy in for ever, are revealed, that we may live and find our joy in them now. "We *look* not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are

not seen"—they must be perfectly revealed then that we may look at them. True it is only by faith now and not by sight; but so substantial and blessed are they to faith, that we are willing rather to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord to enjoy them by sight. (See the connection of 2 Cor. v. 7 and 8.) Thus in Romans viii. they are "the things of the Spirit," that they that are after the Spirit mind. It is the second great point of the delivered condition of the Christian as it is there developed; not only a deliverance of life in Christ in the power of the Spirit, but practically by the power of the new objects suited to that life. Now the things of the Spirit are the things of Christ—"All things that the Father hath are mine: therefore said I, that he shall take of mine and shew it unto you," that so Christ may be characteristically, as He is in fact, our life—the man formed by what he makes his object as ever even in natural things, how much more in divine.

It is just what Colossians gives us in very full development; only there we are risen with Christ, though not looked at as seated in the heavenlies, but as a risen people upon earth, set to "*seek* those things which are above"—and here we see the practical power of the link of Christ's presence there, for our hearts—"*where Christ is*, sitting on the right hand of God." (Col. iii. 1, 2.) And note, it is the *mind* we are exhorted to set "on things above, and not on things on the earth," for the Spirit of God assumes that our *affections* will be there, and says nothing of them. The mind is distinct from the affections. As it has been truly put in illustration of the difference: a man's affections may rest in his family and his

mind be all the while engrossed in his business. Now the Spirit would have our minds *engrossed with Christ.* For many walk, the same apostle tells us weeping, in Philippians, who mind (using the same word) earthly things, and are enemies of that which is the distinctively separative power of Christianity, the *cross* of Christ, whatever their profession to be His friends. And then in one blessed expression of it he sums up the whole christian position, viewed practically, "our citizenship is in heaven." He uses a word of far-reaching force for a Greek mind, who held all other relationships and interests in life subordinate to his citizenship—as though he would say: All that forms the life morally, in relationship, love, motive, object and joy, is found for us in heaven now; so that we only await, in *hope* too thence, the Lord Jesus as Saviour, to change this body of humiliation into the likeness of His body of glory according to the working by which He is able even to subdue all things unto Himself.

In Ephesians, where we have the fullest unfolding of our place in Christ, from the point of view of God's everlasting counsels, there is no place for the formative power of heavenly objects, presented to a risen people on earth. We are blessed with all spiritual blessings in Christ in the heavenlies, even as we are seated in Him there, with our testimony to the principalities and powers in the heavenlies, and are in conflict there with those of Satan. All is heavenly, not only in life and nature, object, hope and character, but in present position in Christ, and our answering responsibilities are simply to come out thence to display on earth what the nature of God

Himself is in love and light, where it was once displayed in all its perfection in Christ.

Thus fully, in infinite grace, in a way beyond all that could have been conceived by the two disciples that followed Jesus, the desire that He awakens in hearts truly drawn to Him has been met—not merely by the revelation of heaven to us in every divine trait of its blessedness in His Person here, but when His work was done, in giving us our place there in Him as a present thing, in all the cloudless light and favour of His place, so that we are only waiting for Him to come and change our bodies in the twinkling of an eye and take us actually to be with Himself for ever. His place and home in heavenly light and love is revealed as ours already. But is it merely to rest in the assured certainty of it? How soon then to become but the barren doctrine—so much the more dreadful as that—of the highest privilege or knowledge that puffeth up, in that it is of so exalted a place and calling. No, my beloved brethren, it must not be so with us. What alone will keep the heart in the power of what is heavenly, and impart the tone and character of our associations with Christ there to our walk here, is the active seeking of His presence that makes heaven now and for ever. If our hearts are set for this by His grace, we cannot find Him in the world out of which He has been rejected. He has ascended up to the scene of which morally He had been the full revelation in His own Person here, and our hearts follow Him. Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also. He draws them there by the excellency of His glory, and beauty, and preciousness. As even with one of old—before the

whole glory of God shone perfectly revealed as for us, so that we may gaze upon it with adoring hearts, in the face once more marred than that of any man, —"*one thing* have I desired of the Lord, that will I *seek* after; that I may dwell in the house of the Lord *all the days of my life*, to behold the beauty of the Lord." And does He not satisfy the longings that He creates, as in figure with the two disciples "they came and saw where he dwelt and *abode* with him that day," if even now with this satisfying there comes increased capacity for enjoyment, and therefore fresh longing (and in this consists the soul's growth), till in the divine fulness of His presence we are satisfied for ever?

"Whither I go ye know"—well we may! What has been left undone to make us familiar with the heaven of His home, and ours now? So that abiding in spirit with Him, seeking His face, we may be formed practically by all that is there, to shew out nothing but what is heavenly in tone and character and ways, carried out into everything on earth. The power for it is found, not in fruitless effort to be heavenly when we are not, but in realising what we are, as constituted such by the power and grace of our calling, and given the Holy Ghost to fix our hearts on Christ. He has ascended up far above all heavens that He might fill all things. May we know Him as the One who fills our hearts, as He alone can, and shall for ever!

JOY.

(Deuteronomy and Philippians.)

I have thought that, as the Book of Joshua finds its antitype in the application of the truth to us, in the Epistles to the Colossians and the Ephesians, where we are introduced by the death and resurrection of Christ into a state meet for, and into, present heavenly association with Him, Deuteronomy might be found to stand in somewhat the same relation to the Epistle to the Philippians, as bringing out the practical condition that flows from our hearts entering by faith upon this heavenly ground, and that alone consists with the abiding enjoyment of it. We are hence not without needed warning as to the dangers that beset the path of the heavenly man on earth.

One point may at least suggest the comparison. It is this: that as the epistle is of all others *the* epistle of joy, so this same blessed feature largely characterises the Book of Deuteronomy. Here first in the Pentateuch it is found to have any place. There is not any passage that I am aware of, that speaks of *joy* outside the scenes contemplated in this book (Lev. xxiii. 40; Num. x. 9, 10) save Exodus xviii. 9; whereas there are found in it seven occasions on which God enjoins joy on the people whom He loves in this blessed way to gather round Himself. First, *generally*, in chapter xii., when "come to the rest and to the inheritance which Jehovah your God giveth you," which is assumed in all the cases, two things were to give character to the joy of the people.

In the place which Jehovah would choose to put His name, "thither ye shall bring your burnt-offerings, and your sacrifices, and your tithes. . . . and there ye shall eat before the Lord your God, and ye shall *rejoice in all that ye put your hand unto*, ye and your households." (Ver. 7.) And secondly (ver. 12), "Ye shall rejoice *before Jehovah your God*."

Then follow five *special* occasions for the joy that is given to be thus generally characteristic of their relationship with Jehovah in the land of their possession: when the tithe of all the increase of the field, the firstlings of the herd and flock, were presented before Him (chap. xiv. 22–27); on the occasion of the Feast of Weeks (chap. xvi. 9–12); and the Feast of Tabernacles (vers. 13–15); when the basket of firstfruits was presented. (chap. xxvi.); and, lastly, when on entering the land they were immediately to set up the altar which was to bear the inscription of the law, ever to remind them of obedience as the essential condition of their practical enjoyment of their possession. (Chap. xxvii. 1–11.)

It will be observed that chapters i.–xi. rehearse the solemn lessons of the wilderness journey in view of the people's entering the land. From chapter xii., which looks at them in possession, God unfolds for the first time His blessed thought to have them in this holy liberty of *joy* before Him, as characteristic of their relationship with Him. There is the same essential condition of the joy in each of the cases. The people are assumed to be in possession—able to say, "We were Pharaoh's bondmen in Egypt . . . . and he brought us out from thence, that he might *bring us in*, to give us the land which he sware unto

our fathers." (Chap. vi. 23.) See this very strongly marked in chapter xxvi. 1–14, when the basket of firstfruits is presented: "And it shall be, when thou art *come in* unto the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee for an inheritance, and *possessest* it, and *dwellest* therein; that thou shalt take of the first of all the fruit of the earth, which thou shalt bring of thy land that the Lord thy God giveth thee, and shalt put it in a basket. . . . And thou shalt set it before the Lord thy God, and worship before the Lord thy God: and thou shalt rejoice in every good thing which the Lord thy God hath given unto thee."

Joy then flows from *possession*. The deliverance of redemption, essential as it is to joy and leading into it, does not in itself suffice for joy. In the wilderness Israel was a redeemed people brought to God, who at the opening of their path through it could sing of all that was against them being gone for ever—"sunk as lead in the mighty waters." But joy is not found in the books of the wilderness. The one exception (above referred to) makes this the more striking, for Exodus xviii. carries us on in picture to the final result of the ways of God in grace towards the people; it is a millennial scene, and here, in beautiful fitness, the *Gentile* Jethro it is who "*rejoiced* for all the goodness Jehovah had done to Israel." (Comp. Deut. xxxii. 43.)

Romans v. 1–11 may seem at first sight to check the application of the principle to us, but it will be found, I think, to confirm it. For it is not the deliverance that makes the joy here, though it assumes, as joy ever must, that we are delivered, for how can we be happy with God if we are not? but we

rejoice "in hope of the *glory* of God," and, if also in the tribulations of the way that leads there, we have the love that puts us into them shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us; and thus we are brought to joy in God Himself "through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have received the reconciliation." Chapter viii. is the delivered condition that is needed for the joy of chapter v., where this deeper character of experience flows from what *God* is being more fully brought out. "For Christ has once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us *to God*."

That if really with God, our hearts will be powerfully affected by a deliverance wrought for us at such infinite cost, I need not say; but the difference of the experience connected with it is marked in the book before us, and will be observed by comparing the first great gathering of the Jewish year—that of the Passover—with the two others already referred to, as chapter xvi. brings them together. The last two only had their place when the people were in possession of the land, and answer for us respectively to Pentecost, and (as far as the Feast of Tabernacles has as yet any antitype) to the indwelling of the Holy Ghost, as now come from Jesus glorified, to put the power of the glory into our hearts before the day for the manifestation of it. Both were to be scenes of joy; the Feast of Weeks, characterised by a free-will offering unto the Lord according to the measure of appreciation of the blessing, "and thou shalt rejoice before the Lord thy God;" the Feast of Tabernacles, by the fulness of the blessing itself, harvest and vintage over, "thou shalt rejoice in thy feast;" because of

the Lord's blessing in all their increase and in all the works of their hands, "therefore thou shalt surely rejoice."

But in the feast that accompanied the Passover, which brings out specially the ground of our deliverance and all blessing, in the infinite sorrow and death of the Son of God, it is not joy that becomes us, but "the unleavened bread, even the bread of affliction," in the solemn judgment of ourselves: "Thou shalt sacrifice the passover at even, at the going down of the sun, at the season that thou camest forth out of Egypt. And thou shalt roast and eat it in the place which the Lord thy God shall choose: and thou shalt turn in the morning, and go unto thy tents."

In full keeping with what has been before us, will be found the place that joy has in the Epistle to the Philippians. Deliverance is not the subject. Neither sins nor the flesh of sin come into view to be delivered from. If religious flesh be looked at for a moment, it is only as an utterly valueless thing, long since cast aside. The full deliverance of our place as dead and risen with Christ is assumed ("we are the circumcision"), and the epistle presents the experience that flows from it, the Holy Ghost expressing it in power in the apostle. It is Christ as life in us on earth, the practical answer to being one with Him who is in heaven. This leads up our hearts there; "our citizenship is in heaven," while we are walking on the earth. It is possession, heavenly possession *thus far*, that brings us to the spring of joy. Not the heaven of the future, with its rest and glory come and our responsible path and conflict over; but there is

the sense of present association with Christ, who is there, and thus the power of heaven as a present revealed scene possessing and forming the heart of the Christian. It is Christ, as the opened eye of faith is upon Him in glory, known as the power and joy of going on day by day for Him here, till we reach Him actually there.

Can it be wondered at, then, that if this be the experience of the Christian joy should be so largely developed in the epistle that has this experience for its main subject? Nor is it merely joy as *enjoined* upon us, if there be still room for earnest exhortation to it (chap. iii. 1, iv. 4), but as now *produced* and flowing out in worship by the Spirit of God (chap. iii. 3), so as to become characteristic of the Christian.

But here the Book of Deuteronomy supplies a warning. The principle of it is this: that while deliverance will not in itself suffice for joy, but that there must be the conscious possession by faith of our heavenly place in Christ, yet this can never be safely dissociated from the deliverance that was needed to bring us into it. Possession without the sense of this, such are our poor hearts, only tends to ruin, and the richer the possession the greater the danger. There must be maintained in the soul the sense of how and from what depths we have been delivered. The light of the place we have been brought into is shed back on what we have been brought out of, and thus enhances for us the preciousness of the grace that has done it, while there is deepened the knowledge of ourselves that humbles and keeps us humble before God. It will be found in chapter viii. 11–16: "Beware that thou forget not the

Lord thy God, in not keeping his commandments .... lest when thou hast eaten and art full, and hast built goodly houses, and dwelt therein .... then thine heart be lifted up, and thou forget the Lord thy God, which brought thee forth out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage; who led thee through that great and terrible wilderness .... that he might humble thee, and .... prove thee." Nor was the remembrance of what they had been delivered from to be found wanting on the principal occasions of their gladness (see chap. xxvi.); and so it is also ordered in the Feast of Weeks: "thou shalt remember that thou wast a bondman in Egypt" (chap. xvi. 12), and most markedly of all in the Feast of Tabernacles. During this feast, that was the fullest expression of their having come into the enjoyment of the promised blessing, they were to dwell in booths seven days, "that your generations may know that I made the children of Israel to dwell in booths when I brought them out of the land of Egypt."

But the warning was unheeded by Israel. Resting in possession, they forgot the deliverance that had been wrought for them; their hearts were lifted up, and they came under the hand of God in judgment. A subsequent page of their history, in a time of revival for a remnant restored to the land, reveals that from Joshua to Nehemiah they had not *dwelt in booths* in the feast of the seventh month. (Neh. viii. 14–17.) And are *we* more safe if we disregard the tears of the apostle, who weeps over the walk of those within the circle of christian profession, who are enemies of the *cross* of Christ? (Phil iii. 18.)

Not the glory of Christ is our safety against the flesh or the world, but the cross that gives us God's estimate and judgment of both. What savoured things that be of men in Peter did not rise up to resent the *glory*, but the *cross* of Christ. (Matt. xvi. 16–24.) Its solemn sentence upon self and everything here is the only true answer to the knowledge of Christ in heavenly glory.

There was another essential condition of Israel's enjoyment of their possession, it was obedience—see chapter vi., and indeed everywhere in Deuteronomy. Similarly does the epistle urge it upon us whose is "the calling on high of God in Christ Jesus." Obedience (when there was still personal apostolic care, but much more in the absence of it) was the path in which to work out *our own* salvation now, from the whole power of the enemy, "For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure." (Chap. ii. 12, 13.)

But this is not all; we have seen that christian life according to the epistle is simply *Christ:* "To me to live is Christ." The path of this life is consequently the producing again in us by the Spirit's power of what Christ was here. (See chap. ii. 15, 16.) It is thus He gave us His own path, with obedience as the necessary condition of its joy, in John xv. 9–11. So it is fully here, chapter ii. 5: "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus." And then He is presented to us in the path of His humiliation —"*obedient* unto death, even the death of the cross." Now it is the Book of Deuteronomy that furnished Him in the place He had taken in grace as man, with the suited and perfect word of God

for man, by simply keeping which He baffled the whole power of the enemy. (Comp. Matt. iv. 1–11 with Deut. viii. 3 and vi. 13–16.) And the word that thus found its perfect and blessed expression in Him is now given to form and direct the life we have in Him in the same path of His obedience: "man shall not *live* by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." How different was such obedience in the principle of it to that of the law! The law supposed a will antagonistic to God, in forbidding it. Christ had none such to be forbidden; He *lived* by the word out of the mouth of God; it not merely guided His path, but was the *spring* and *origin* of all that found place in His inmost heart and life. And we are "sanctified to *the obedience of Christ*."

Another principle abidingly true for the saint, whatever the dispensation, is not without illustration in Deuteronomy and Philippians. It is this, that our walk could never be according to the level of our position if we had only this position to sustain us. We must have an *object above* our path to maintain it at its true height. Thus it was that Abraham "sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles .... *for* he looked for a city which hath foundations." (Heb. xi. 9, 10.) So with Israel in the land, if any under the law walked in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless, it was only as their eye was outside their position, upon the Messiah. He is presented to their expectation in Deuteronomy xviii. Our epistle gives the principle its full expression as to the Christian. If the path that belongs to our posi-

tion is to have the mind which was in Christ Jesus in us, to "walk as he walked," the only power to produce it is to have heart and mind above upon Christ in glory as our one object. (Phil. iii. 8–16.)

One more word of solemn import and warning for us will be found in Deuteronomy. It is the only other mention of joy in the book; I refer to chapter xxviii. 47, 48: "Because thou servedst not the Lord with joyfulness, and with gladness of heart, for the abundance of all things; therefore thou shalt serve thine enemies which the Lord shall send against thee, in hunger, and in thirst, and in nakedness, and in the want of all things." Failing in joy, there is practical loss of the possession, that is, here in our tested path. Is there not danger for us? Not all who are Christ's may have come to know heaven as the present revealed scene, where Christ has given us our home, interests, objects and joys—now therefore to form and give its character to our christian walk on the earth. But what about those who have in any measure? May not heavenly things lose their power over our hearts? Are we not conscious of the tendency of everything around us to drag us down to the level of the world in which we walk? What need of diligent, watchful keeping of the heart against the first enfeebling of joy! For this indicates that decline has begun, and the descent is easy and rapid when once the heart begins to go. Two things then mark the state: heaven, lost in present power, is put off to the future, and the Christian, become worldly, instead of knowing the "fellowship of his sufferings, being conformed to his death," is accredited by the world.

May the excellency of the knowledge of a glorified Christ keep us! May His presence in glory so attract our hearts there that we may practically "possess" and "dwell in" the bright scene He has opened to us! Then will our life on earth be bright, for it will be but the reflex of His—a life of heavenly joy, whatever the circumstances of the path. "The joy of the Lord is your strength." He Himself shines before us as the end of it, the one glorious object to be reached, giving earnestness in pressing on through everything here to be perfectly like Him and with Him.

"THE JOY OF THE LORD."

NOTES OF AN ADDRESS (REVISED).

(PHIL. III.; IV. 4–7.)

IT is a blessed thing to have such an epistle as this to the Philippians in which we find the true normal experience of the Christian presented to us, and that in the life of a fellow servant. The more we think of it the more we shall see the wisdom of God in presenting it thus to us, and not as a matter of doctrine. For in that case, in the treachery of our hearts, we might have said, It is all very fine, but such experience is impossible in a world like this; or else that it was apostolic, or in some sort ministerial, and not within the range of ordinary christian life. But the Spirit of God has inspired the apostle to record for us his own experience, in an epistle not addressed as from an apostle but from "Paul and Timothy, the servants of Jesus Christ." (Ver. 1.) It is then simply normal christian experience—the true, proper fruit of the grace and power of the Spirit in the Christian, humbling as it is to own it, seeing that we know so little of it, though the resources that produced it in Paul are as available and effectual for us.

If there is one thing more characteristic of this blessed experience than another it is joy. The epistle bears the stamp of it throughout. We might not, perhaps, have been prepared to find it so strongly

marked here; we might have looked for it to be all joy in Ephesians, where the position of the Christian is in view, and that presented to us at the full height of God's eternal counsels, the fruit of a new creation in which they are accomplished, quickened together with Christ, raised up together and made to sit together in the heavenlies in Christ. But we do not find that joy characterises Ephesians as it does Philippians, which presents the Christian in the path down here, in the circumstances of the daily life with Christ as the power and joy of going through them, and the heavenly glory of Christ as the end before us —a life of divine and heavenly joy in the circumstances whatever they be. Nothing could have been more trying than Paul's circumstances. Suddenly arrested in all the energy of that wonderful service, thrown into prison, from whence there was no probable outlook but a martyr's death, everything going wrong in the church—his deepest interest because it was Christ's; yet his heart is so full, he only seeks that his brethren outside the prison might share the joy his own spirit drank into so deeply. If it were to be his last word, so to speak, it is "*Finally*, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord." "*In the Lord*"—therein lay the spring of the joy for him and for us, a joy not found in or dependent in any way upon our circumstances, but which circumstances may be used to deepen as they shut us up to Him who is the source of the joy. How blessed to have this life of heavenly joy upon earth presented to us in the experience of this beloved servant, and to see the source and power of it in Christ known in heavenly glory as the object of the soul, "To me to *live* is *Christ*;" his charac-

teristic existence was Christ, and the object is as powerful to produce it in us as in him.

It may be thought that the time is inappropriate to be speaking of joy, in days when the ruin of the church presses more and more upon our hearts. But they were not bright days in Nehemiah's time, when God first enunciated the principle, in His grace, that "The joy of the Lord is your strength." (Neh. viii. 10.) They had opened brightly with a returned remnant, seeking out the original ground of their calling. But the early energy of faith needed to maintain it had already declined and there was grave departure. In the last days we find ourselves most surely: the principles of ruin, begun even in apostolic times, have been fearfully developed, and even in a returned remnant, once more seeking out the original ground of a very different calling, the worst failure has been manifested. Is there any ground for discouragement? There is the deepest ground for humiliation, but *no* ground for losing heart. No epistle is so full of courage as 2 Timothy, which depicts for us the ruin in which we are. "The joy of the Lord is your strength."

It would appear that at this third chapter the apostle supposed he was about to close the epistle—"Finally," &c. But the Spirit leads him to write on, and how well for us it is so. For now he takes up the various hindrances that might affect the realising of this joy on earth, not indeed to occupy us with the hindrances, but that we may know resources of power to carry us on in joy in spite of every hindrance. Verse 2 is a warning, in terms purposely contemptuous, against one and the same phase of evil

that so early corrupted the church and dogged the apostle everywhere, in the form of Judaising teachers, by whom Satan sought so early to drag down Christianity to a religion for man and this world. "Concision" is a term of reproach, indicating that which was partial, in comparison with "circumcision," which was a total cutting off; this latter term he reserves for Christianity where alone the reality of it is known; verse 3 being a beautiful description of the christian position. "We are the circumcision," that is, those who have accepted the total cutting off of man in the cross, under the judgment of God. "In whom ye also have been circumcised," &c. (Col. ii. 11.) It is not only that to faith "our old man" has been crucified with Him—that is, all we were as characterised by flesh and sin—but that we have bowed to the end of the man himself, the first man, in the death of Christ, and renounced his whole living status as such in this world. (See Col. ii. 20.) It is the complete end and setting aside, for God and for the faith of our souls, of the first man in the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ. This makes room for another thing, even "worship by *the Spirit of* God" (the true reading), instead of by the machinery of the flesh, or its efforts; "and rejoice in Christ Jesus," which gives us the spring of the worship, the overflow of the joy going up in worship—by the Spirit as the power of it. Now that is the characteristic position of the Christian.

"And have no confidence in the flesh": this brings us to the first great hindrance—religious flesh; I say religious, because it is that side of the flesh that specially makes the difficulty in the experience of

souls. One who is brought to God from open evil has not the same temptation to occupation with self. If he looks back at what he was it is with a shudder; but one who has successfully cultivated the flesh as Saul of Tarsus had, and gained a high position among his fellow men by it, is in danger of a reflex eye upon that which had been his pride. Now the apostle can present himself as having gone further than his fellows in this self-cultivation; his experience is briefly summed up in verses 4–6. How earnestly religious—of the straitest sect of the Jews, he had lived a Pharisee, "touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless" in outward conduct, and, we learn from Acts xxiii. 1, strictly conscientious in all his life. But what was all that is so highly esteemed among men found connected with? With the most determinate enmity to Christ, not in humiliation but in glory now, ever expressed in man, seeking to blot out the very memory of His name from the earth. What a moment when he saw that blessed One, against whom he had been running full tilt with all the energy of his being, reveal Himself to him in a light above the brightness of the sun! What an appalling exposure of what man is at his best before God! "What things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ"! When his eyes were opened thus on the Lord Jesus gone up as Man in divine righteousness into the glory of God, and He became revealed to him as his life and righteousness before that glory, what became of moral, religious, earnestly cultivated self? He counts it as refuse—"dung, that I may win Christ, and be found in him, not having my own righteousness, which is of the

law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith."

But it may be asked, How could the apostle *look* to be found in Him as a still future thing? Was not Christ already the ground upon which as a believer he stood before God? Most surely it was. If it were not so he could not have looked to be found in Him in heavenly glory. But this brings before us what is the immense power of the epistle, namely, the things that are *before the heart*, what it has as *its object*. It is not merely that my place as a Christian involves the renunciation of all that is of self, "the end of all flesh" as having come in the cross; but as Paul looks on into the everlasting glory, his object is to be found there only in Christ, in a righteousness which is of God instead of anything of his own—divine righteousness instead of the best human righteousness. How completely this sets aside everything of that once highly cultivated self—a righteousness which is wholly, absolutely of God, and become his only by faith in Christ Jesus. Self is no longer before the mind's eye. Where is there a loophole left for anything of the first man to come in? How immense the power practically, for the displacement of self in all its subtle forms, in having Christ *before him* as the One in whom he was looking to be found in the glory of God for ever. And thus the first great hindrance is cleared out of the way.

The next thing that comes before him as a hindrance to a realisation of this life of joy is all that surrounds us in this world. We see now how deliverance is found from this great snare. It is still by the power of that which I make my object.

(Ver. 10.) "That I may know him." How the heart is arrested by that word! He has just told us of the effect upon him of "the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord." It was not merely the surrender of what had been his gain, in the first flush of his joy in that wonderful revelation; but there had been the *maintained* estimate of the worthlessness of everything here, "I *count* all things but loss." But more, the test *had come*, and he had "*suffered* the *loss* of all things," and was able for the sake of Christ so known to look back on all he had lost as only refuse, no loss at all, "and do count them but dung." What can be the meaning of it then, you ask, "That I may know him"? Who ever knew Him as Paul? It means, beloved brethren, that the knowledge of Christ is insatiable. The more we know Him, the more we *must* know. All the heart has learned to know of Him in any feeble measure is only the foundation for a deepening longing to know Him better. Surely there comes a divine satisfying in every divinely-created longing. For "He satisfieth the longing soul." The longing desire of his soul was "that I may know him." Does not that carry with it a divine satisfaction? It does, but only to create capacity for a deeper longing, then a deeper satisfying; and so the growth of the soul is carried on as long as we are here in these longings, with their divine satisfyings, till at last the fulness is reached in His blessed presence for ever. Do we know anything of such desire? It is a totally different thing from resting in Him as a Saviour, at peace with God by all He has brought us out of and into. We must begin there; but all the *growth* of

the soul depends upon having *Him*, God's object for me, as my object for myself, as we see it brought out in the apostle.

"That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection," that is, the power of the place where He has associated us with Him, and this sought, not that peace may be more perfect or any blessing better entered into, but that we may go down more fully into the path of rejection with Him here, "the fellowship of his *sufferings*." No such fellowship will ever be known in the eternal glory: if we have missed it now, it is missed for ever. Do we know what it is to be attracted to Him by all His grace and by the glory of His Person in this time of His rejection? There is a fellowship of His sufferings more sweet than even that of His glory. David's mighty men had no such intimacy with him in the glories of the kingdom as when he was hunted like a partridge on the mountains. How incalculable the loss if, through unfaithfulness or lack of purpose of heart for Christ, we miss the fellowship of His sufferings which we are called to now, as the richest privilege of our association with Him in this time and place of His rejection. And the apostle would stop at nothing short of being conformed unto His death. He would go the whole path with Him.

And now (ver. 11) we have the key to this blessed decision in the object before him, "If any way I arrive at the resurrection from among the dead." (See New Trans.) Is it that the apostle is uncertain of reaching his destination? No; such a thought would be to miss the whole point of the passage. It is only the expression of the energy with which, his

eye being on the *end* of the path, he is pressing on to reach that end. The character of the way that leads there is nothing to him. It might be painful and toilsome, a martyr's death might lie on it, it is nothing to him. His eye and heart are wholly pre-occupied with the glorious end—full resurrection conformity to the image of the Son of God. He knows that that was what he was apprehended for, and nothing short of it will satisfy the apostle. How is it with us, beloved brethren? Are we resting in being saved? or pressing on with every energy of our whole being to reach what God has set before His people—what we have been saved for—to be with Christ and like Christ in heavenly glory? How complete the deliverance by such an object, from the world and its things! Let Satan deck out the world in its best, there is what eclipses it totally in the One who shines before the apostle's heart here. Let him be offered the finest place there ever was for man in this world, of what value would it be to one who is pressing on to be conformed to Christ's image in glory? Nothing else will deliver us from the scene that surrounds us but the power of an object outside it altogether. Satan's objects are all bounded by the horizon of this world, he cannot present to us one thing outside it. The object God presents to us is absolutely outside this world. Tell me, is to reach Christ in glory an adequate object to absorb our hearts? We little estimate the present practical power even in natural things of what we make our object. We see it here in the divine object before the apostle: it forms him.

"Not as though I had already attained, either were

already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended by Christ Jesus." Apprehend is, according to the force of the word here, laying hold of the thing. It is not any apprehension of the mind, as we now commonly use the word; it is laying hold in actual glory of what Christ laid hold of me for. When the first arrow of conviction reached the conscience, and divine love brought in the rays of divine light that shewed us to ourselves, and shone on to shew Him to us, He laid hold of us to be like Him in glory. That is what the apostle was following after. "Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this *one* thing I do." He had not twenty irons in the fire, as is often supposed to be desirable. Oh, for more concentration of mind on the object God has set before us! "One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I *seek* after." What energy of *pursuit* of that which he desired. Ah! there is where we so often fail. We lack the energy of faith that will not be turned aside from the object that we have desired. "Forgetting those things which are behind" will be understood in the measure in which the goal is before the soul, and we are running on to it. It does not refer to failure —we are never meant to forget that; the remembrance of it is needed to keep us humble; but the past points of *progress* are not thought of in the earnestness of the pursuit of what is still before. "Reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the goal for the prize of the calling on high of God in Christ Jesus."

What a deliverance from the poor things of the scene the race lies through! And the apostle sets it

before us as proper normal christian experience—not merely to be admired in Paul—"let us, as many as be perfect." There can be no perfection of *condition* short of reaching Christ in glory. He had used the word in this sense in verse 12. Here (verse 15) the perfect are those who are in the faith of their souls in Christ, the christian position. "Be thus minded" —have no other mind or range of object than that presented to us in the experience of this blessed servant. "And if in anything ye be otherwise minded,"—he will not let down the standard to any one's imperfect realisation of it—"God shall reveal even this unto you." The next verse would meet another tendency. Lest I should suppose it to be Christianity to go on by myself alone, and think of no one else, he encourages us to seek out what we have reached in common, and "keep rank"—"walk in the same steps": he cannot say, "mind the same thing" (which has no authority), for the case supposed is of those who are as yet "otherwise minded." (Ver. 15.) It is the will of God then that we should consider others, who may not have as fully got hold of the true christian object, to lead them on to this instead of giving them up, though at last it may have to come to this. If all were formed by the object of the apostle's mind, the difficulty would not arise.

In a few closing words we have the reality of these things brought out the more by a terrible contrast. "Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark them which walk so as ye have us for an ensample." And then verses 18, 19, tell the sorrowful tale of what had already come true in the profession of Christianity. For it was not over heathen he was thus

weeping, nor can he say that they were enemies of Christ, for they professed to be His friends; but he says that they were enemies of the *cross* of Christ—of that which was the separative power in Christianity, bringing His death between us and man and his world, "whose end is destruction." Here it is often asked, are these mere professors? and thus our deceitful hearts would turn away the whole point of the instruction, and miss the solemn warning for ourselves. The apostle does *not* introduce the question of their soul's relationship with God. He pronounces upon their outward path—"who mind earthly things," that we should solemnly consider it, "whose end is destruction." We know that if a true child of God be found on that road, he will be delivered out of it before it reaches its fearful end. But let there be no weakening of the warning: minding earthly things is the road to hell. Do we then never mind earthly things? Where have our minds been to-day? Have they been reaching forth to the things that are before, as God has presented them to us? or have we been pursuing some wretched object of earth? How needed the word! The Lord give us to open our consciences and hearts to it that we may be preserved. For this is the true effect of the warnings of scripture for those who know His grace. As I might say to my child, "If you fall over that precipice you will be dashed to pieces:" not that I mean to let it fall; but the moral effect is to make the child cling close to me. We are preserved by such warnings.

And now in one beautiful word the Spirit sums up the Christian's position. (Ver. 20.) "Our conversa-

tion is in heaven." It is hardly possible to render the full force of it in English. It is "citizenship," but that to our minds is a cold political thing; to a Greek it was everything: his citizenship came before wife, children or any other interest in life. The Spirit can thus take up this word to bring out the truth of such deep moment for us, that all that forms the Christian's life morally, in its deepest springs, is in heaven now. What a wonderful contrast for us who once belonged to earth! What a new circle and sphere of glory is this we have been brought into! Our new relationships, interests, objects, joys and hopes are found in heaven! In one far-reaching word, "Our citizenship is in heaven, from whence also we await the Lord Jesus Christ as Saviour" (ver. 20), so that we may reach the glorious goal without death at all. But there is no clashing between these two aspects of the things before us: resurrection conformity to Christ in glory for which we are pressing on, instead of seeking any object this side that glory; and the hope of His coming that satisfies the affections while we wait and watch. How blessed to be found of the Lord at any moment that He comes, pressing on through everything here in the power of an object that is His for us, even to bear His image in the glory—changed in the twinkling of an eye then into it, all that is mortal being swallowed up in the power of a life that is already ours in Him.

No wonder that the apostle can now return to his final exhortation with redoubled force. (Chap. iv. 4.) "Rejoice in the Lord *alway*: again I say, Rejoice." But some one may think that the greatest hindrance

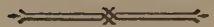
of all to joy has been overlooked. What about care? One absolute word, "Be careful for nothing." "Ah!" says some one, "if you only knew my circumstances you would know that it was perfectly impossible for me to be without care." But does not He who inspired this word know every circumstance of yours, beloved brother or sister? It is God who says to you, "Be careful for nothing." And with the word He gives the resource to lift you above all that would have otherwise pressed on you for care, "in *everything*"—again how absolute—the merest trifle or what seems of the greatest concern; it is enough that it presses on you: "by prayer and supplication . . . . let your requests be made known unto God." It is His will that we should lay before Him whatever it is that presses upon us. But I have omitted a clause, "with thanksgiving"—how important as to the state of the soul! giving thanks, not for the answer that we expect (He has something far greater than this for us), but because we know His love; we have the only gauge and measure of it, in that He has not spared His own Son but given Him up for us all, and we *know* that all is well, and can bow in thanksgiving. It is the normal expression of the Christian's confidence in the heart of God. And now comes the greater thing, "The peace of God . . . . shall keep your hearts and minds."

It is not the peace of Christ here, "my peace" that He gave us in John xiv.—the peace of the Man who passed through my circumstances, the calm, unruffled peace of resting in the Father's love, and submitting in all things to Him. That is given us unconditionally. This is conditional, but the con-

dition is only that we trust God with what would bring care, instead of carrying it as a burden ourselves. And it is the peace of *God*, of Him who sits on the throne where no breath of trouble ever came. He guarantees by His faithful word to put this peace, in all this its wonderful character, in the heart of the one who puts his cares into God's heart. Well, you say, I cannot understand it. Ah! God has anticipated you, for He says, "which passeth all understanding." We have then only to confide in Him as to anything that would suggest a care, to prove the blessedness of His peace keeping the heart and "thoughts" (as the word really is, often so difficult to regulate) in a way to make us a wonder to ourselves and to all who know us.

Well, beloved, in conclusion I can only put it to myself and to you, Do we know much in practical experience of this life of joy upon earth? I admit that peace is a deeper thing. God never takes the name of the God of joy as characteristic of His relationship with us, but He does that of "God of peace" continually. It is because peace depends on the work done for us, and is as stable, to the faith that rests in that work, as the throne on which the Lord Jesus sits; while joy depends so much on our state, on the power and realisation in communion, of the things in which the joy is found—Christ and His sphere of glory. Is He "enough the mind and heart to fill"? or are we, instead of with a mind fixed on Him, allowing ourselves to be distracted, if not as, alas! too often actually attracted, by the thousand and one things Satan has to present to us in his sphere of the world? It is here, and now, we are

tested as to how far Christ is known where He is—"the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus our Lord"—to satisfy and form us by heavenly objects, so as to have power to express a life of divine and heavenly joy upon earth—the most blessed testimony we can render to Him, and without which there is none. "The joy of the Lord is your strength." May it be yours and mine, beloved brethren, to realise it increasingly, allowing the sharp edge of His word and warning to come upon all that would obstruct and hinder it, till we enter into the fulness of it, where there will be no more to distract in His presence for ever.



OUR ASSOCIATION WITH CHRIST.

"Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth ALONE: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit." (John xii. 24.)

IT is one thing to enjoy in peace with God the fruit of the work of Christ for us, but quite another to begin in any measure to enter into the way the love of Christ is engaged in it. Yet it is just this that gives its special character to our blessings as Christians, and enhances the enjoyment of it infinitely. Take the word "*alone*" in this central verse, that is like the pivot upon which all Christianity turns; and what a revelation it is of the springs and motives in the heart of Christ of what He came into the world to accomplish. Have we thought of it thus? It tells that He who was the perfect object of the Father's love in the place He took as man, felt alone in that place, and that His heart went out to take others up into it with Himself, even though to do so He must go through death, to enter into it in a wholly new way in resurrection. How much is often contained in a single word of scripture, making us conscious of unfathomable depths below what is expressed! And so it is here.

But thus we are led into the thoughts of God and what occupies Him, instead of being taken up with our own blessing only to cramp and limit the apprehension of it. Nor was what is thus in such touching words presented to us, any afterthought of sin and

consequent need of ours. In a wonderful passage where we might have little looked to find it, in the Book of Proverbs (chap. viii.), we are let into the knowledge of our place in the divine thoughts and counsels before ever the earth was. We are carried back into the past eternity, where infinitely sufficing to each other, Wisdom was with Jehovah, the Son with the Father: "the Lord possessed me in the beginning of his way, before his works of old. I was set up from everlasting. . . . When he appointed the foundations of the earth, then I was by him, as one brought up with him: and I was daily his delight, rejoicing always before him." What perfect mutuality of divine joy, but in which the Son was absolutely *alone* with the Father, none else to know, much less to enter into it. Yet we are given to understand what occupied their thoughts in this communion. "Before him, rejoicing in the habitable part of his earth," [note, while as yet He had not made the earth]; "and my delights were with the sons of men." Who could have conceived it, that in the ineffable joy of such divine communion, we should find the intimation of our place in the comprehension of the purposes of God as the objects of His delight.

Still remained the question: how, and by whom, these wondrous counsels were to find their fulfilment. Once again (if only once) in the Old Testament, the veil of the eternal past is lifted, that the volume of the book may disclose the words, "Then said I, Lo, I come; I delight to do thy will, O God." In and from the everlasting glory He had with the Father, the Son of God gave Himself to the work. And in the body prepared for Him (as the Holy Ghost interprets,

"mine ear hast thou digged," of the psalm) we see Him in the gospels enter the lowly path of the accomplishment of the divine will. In the first public steps of it, He goes to identify Himself with those who by grace, taking sinful man's only true place in the confession of their sins, are thereby declared to be the saints, the excellent of the earth, in whom was all His delight, according to Psalm xvi. For Him it was but fulfilling righteousness, carrying out the will in infinite grace He had come to do. How significant that at that moment the heavens (now presented, if for the first time, with a worthy object upon earth) were opened to Him, and the Holy Ghost descended in the form of a dove, and abode upon Him, with a voice from heaven, which said, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." But why that voice? It altered in nothing the place He had with the Father, to declare it thus. Was it not that the Father would have others enter into His thoughts about His Son, that (if in ever so feeble measure), He should become to us what He was to the Father, His beloved Son, our Saviour, and ours too the perfect object of *His* pleasure?

But what rest to turn from our poor thoughts of Him, to see that path open out under the eye and heart of the only One who could enter into it; "No man knoweth the Son but the Father." The gospels present to us the path of Jesus according to the Father's appreciation of all its varied perfection—one solitary track of light across the darkness of this world, alone as He was in the very perfection of it.

At the opening of His ministry in John with the woman of Samaria, we see the blessed principle of

it. The disciples had left Him, in want of rest and drink and food. He had had none, and they return and find Him wonderfully refreshed and satisfied, if the sources of it were too deep for them to enter into: "I have meat to eat that ye know not of . . . . my meat* is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work."

In chapter v., finding the resource of His heart, in presence of the already surging enmity of men, in His known place in the Father's love (ver. 20), and in the communion of every thought that belonged to it, we find that He acts with divine title; but as suited to the place He has taken on earth, not as an independent source of power, but in dependence upon the Father, so as in everything to be the expression of the Father. "The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father do: for whatsoever things he doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise;" adding even as to His sense and judgment of things, "As I hear, I judge: and my judgment is just; because I *seek not my own will*, but the will of the Father which hath sent me." Again, in John vi., He *lived* on account of the Father. (Ver. 57.) How total the contrast to our poor miserable independence and self-seeking.

The more with adoring hearts we contemplate Him, the more we must feel how utterly alone He was in such a path, as Man amongst men; the motive, object and whole principle of it the absolute opposite of every other man's. Nothing that governs the

* He says nothing of His drink, connected as that would be with the yet deeper springs of His life in communion with His Father.

human heart naturally ever entered into His; and what governed and gave its whole character to His life never for a moment affected ours.

"He that speaketh of himself seeketh his own glory [such are we]: but he that seeketh his glory that sent him, the same is true, and no unrighteousness is in him"—such the blessed Lord. Again, "I honour my Father . . . . and seek not my own glory." (Chap. viii. 49, 50.) In lowliness, purity, devotedness, total absence of self-love, obedience, separation to God, grace and faithfulness to men, in every aspect of what He was, He shines out in contrast with all He found in man here. There was no one He could raise to His own level as Man, walking here before God. *He was alone.*

But if thus alone and isolated amongst men by His very perfection as Man, He could say, "He that sent me is with me: the Father hath not left me alone; for I do always those things that please him." (John viii.) The blessed consciousness of the Father's presence was the perfect light and joy in which He walked amid the deep surrounding gloom, sustained by the sense that if men knew Him not, there was One that did, and to whom He could give even new ground for His delight in Him. "Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again." Only in the exercise of divine power could He do this, but as ever using His power only in obedience—"This commandment have I received of my Father." In His case the prince of this world might come, but in vain, he had nothing in Him—"But that the world may know that I love the Father; and as the Father gave me command-

ment, even so I do." (John xiv. 30, 31.) Love and obedience made up all that life, from the deepest springs of it within to the minutest detail of it outwardly.

No wonder that a voice from the excellent glory proclaims again in the hearing of the chosen witnesses what He is to the Father, if unknown and rejected of men: "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." It was on the Mount of Transfiguration. None could have disputed His title to take His place, in right of all His proved perfection, perfect object of the Father's delight, then and there in that glory. But He must have been *alone* in it. And it was not for that, He had become a Man. He comes down from the mount to die. The precious word that we are considering declares His object in so doing. If Greeks desire to see Him, was it not an anticipation of the glory of the kingdom, when the Gentiles should be blessed with Israel? But He puts it from Him now. Something lay nearer to His heart. "Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone." There were those whom first He would take up into association with Himself—an object dearer than the glory of the kingdom—that when He reigns (and in all else) they may share His position. They had been given Him out of the world. They had been drawn to Him by the Father; He would give them eternal life and bring them into all His own place in that life as risen Man, and raise them up at the last day of that dispensation, to have them with Himself in the proper sphere of that life for ever. How little they knew—how little we can enter into—what that involved for Him! He must

die, not only to meet the necessities of their ruined condition according to the glory of God, but to make that new place and state for man in divine righteousness in that glory, in which He could have them with Himself, and thus be no longer alone, according to the yearning and purpose of His love.

It was too much for their poor hearts to learn it, not able yet to rise above Jewish hopes. "The hour cometh, yea, is now come, that ye shall be scattered, every man to his own, and shall leave me *alone*"—deserted even by the little company gathered round Him in such privileged nearness on earth. It must be so. No man could follow Him whither He went, till Jordan's depths were dry. Into these depths of divine judgment due to sin He must pass alone, that death with Him, divested of all fear for us, might be known to faith as but the wondrous passage to life with Him in the power of His resurrection.

But still, for a moment, if His own whom He loved to the end were scattered from Him, He could say, "Yet I am not alone, because the Father is with me." Gethsemane, with all its unutterable weight of woe, was but the anticipation of what yet lay before Him, and was passed through in the unclouded sense of that presence with Him still, that had been His light, His joy, His all, in despisal, rejection, desertion and betrayal, in the accumulated sorrow that pressed around and upon Him in His path of life.

But deeper depths lay before Him. That presence must be withdrawn from Him, when He who knew no sin had to be made sin for us. All other character of sorrow was distanced now. He was to be *alone*, as He never was before. This is what filled that dread-

ful cup, the last crucial test, that if it shewed out on the one hand what man was in sin, on the other, brought out the absolute perfection of man in obedience and devotedness. He who only knew divine love as infinitely the object of it, was now to know the forsaking of God. In His very perfection He shrank from it, "Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me." In presenting the sorrow before the Father in communion, it only made more intolerable the thought of passing out of that communion into the experience of being abandoned of God. Yet He gives Himself to the full accomplishment of the divine will—"not my will, but thine be done."

He had tasted what it was to be alone to the full—He came, and there was no man; He called, and there was none to answer; He looked for comforters, and found none—but it was ever with God before: now, He was to be alone and without Him.

No heart can enter into what that forsaking was to Him; He entered into and endured it that we might never. For Him it served only to bring out fresh aspects of His perfection, as He was never more perfectly the object of His Father's delight. From Gethsemane He turns away to face it: "The cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?"

The realisation of the total change of His position from this point alone brings out what sin is in its full measure. We know what that change is, as far as it can ever be known, by the expression of His sense of it in the cry: "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"

But what unwavering confidence in God, even when

forsaken! "*My* God." No cloud upon that, no hesitation in owning and confessing it, even when He has to add that He had forsaken Him. Nay, He vindicates God even in doing it, "for thou art holy," in the moment when He contrasts Himself with all that ever trusted in Him before and, were delivered, He the only One whose trust was perfect, and yet abandoned. What perfection! Who can estimate it!

We must pass on from what is beyond all thought, but that must linger in the memory of our hearts for ever, where all divine love was expressed to us in His drinking that dreadful cup, to some of the glorious results. He was, oh how infinitely!—*alone*, but accomplishing in it all that was needed to make good the whole glory of God in holiness and righteousness and majesty against sin, and in love to the sinner. So that there, where we find the only measure of what sin is, we find the work that has put it away for ever, and closed for faith the history and existence morally of the man that sinned. Thus God was glorified, and salvation is ours who believe in Him. But it is the character of that salvation, as satisfying the heart of Christ, and not the mere fact of it, that occupies us now. And this comes out as we see Him raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, and now glorified in God, to be alone no longer in this His, for man, new place. The psalm prepares us for it. First, full, precious announcement of it through Mary of Magdala, as He forbids her attempt to renew her relations with Him as Messiah after the flesh, on the ground of far richer ones that He was about to introduce. "Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended unto my Father." In anticipation of that moment when He was to take

His full counselled place as man in the glory of God, He sends her to the disciples with the revelation of it, "I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; unto my God, and your God." All the place He was about to take, as man, with God and with the Father, He has won in divine righteousness for us.

Alone in the impenetrable darkness, He is no longer alone in the light into which He has entered: alone in the unfathomable sorrow, He is not alone in the joy. His first thought in coming out of the darkness and sorrow into the light and joy, is to declare our association with Him in it, "I will declare thy name unto my brethren, in the midst of the church will I sing praise unto thee." For it is not only that in joy He sings; it was no new thing to Him to be in light and joy before the Father, and that too as man, though for a moment all had been totally eclipsed in darkness. But then He was alone. Now on the ground of redemption He enters into man's place in a new way, in which He can have us associated with Him: in the midst of the assembly He sings. The song suits us; His place is ours; in it He will never be alone again. Do we thus sing? How can we ever cease to sing? Alas! that our poor hearts should take up so feebly the note of such a redemption, leading into such consequences for us!

But when we examine more closely the character of the association into which we have been brought, in the light of the word, we find it is both individual and corporate; there is what is possessed and known now, and what lies yet before us.

John's writings do not carry us beyond what is individual in our association with Christ. But this is

largely developed on the precious side of eternal life, the divine nature and relationship of children we have been brought into, to be displayed in us as a present thing, and carried on into the glory. In Paul the association is traced to the full height of Christ's position in the heavenly glory now, brought out as the fruit of God's eternal counsels, and presented in all its individual and corporate aspects, present and to come, save that with him eternal life is always the full state, yet future. The starting-point of all is the Son of man ascending up, where He was before indeed, but now as man on the ground of redemption so gloriously accomplished. "I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; unto my God, and your God." This is the more remarkable in John, as the ascension is not historically found there, and the general subject is the manifestation of eternal life, in Him, as the revealer of the Father here on earth, and now in those who are His, not taking Him or us to heaven save in an exceptional way. But another thing was needed that this life should be possessed in its full christian character of known relationship, liberty, and power, namely, that the Holy Ghost should dwell in us. This great fact depended on the exaltation of Jesus in glory; "the Holy Ghost was not yet, because Jesus was not yet glorified." Thus, as ever founded on the work of the cross, in which God had been so glorified, we have already in the Gospel of John the two great truths that constitute and characterise Christianity—though not carrying us beyond the individual believer's place and state, namely, Jesus ascended and glorified, and, consequent upon this, the coming of the Holy Ghost to dwell in

us. Indeed, there is no such development in scripture of this last truth as in the Gospel of John, in the way of promise, so intimately and necessarily bound up as His presence in the believer is with the present enjoyment of eternal life. Thus, if we find in the Epistle that God has given to us eternal life and this life is in His Son, God dwelling in us by His Spirit is the power of the manifestation of the essential traits of that life in love and obedience (1 John iii. 24, iv. 12), and the merest babe in that life possesses Him. (1 John ii. 27.)

Now let us return from these great principles to notice, in the light of them, what is connected with the first announcement of our association with the ascended Christ. For before He takes His full place, as such, it has pleased the wisdom of God to present Him to us on earth for forty days, after having accomplished all that entitled Him perfectly to man's place in glory according to the counsels of God. Surely it was to bring near to our eyes and hearts, in that risen Man, what was morally suited to the place—ever Himself perfectly so, as we have seen, but necessarily by His very perfection alone in it, until the corn of wheat fell into the ground and died. But here we are permitted to see in the risen One the manifestation of a new place and state for man, that we have part in—of the Son of God in power, past death and the judgment of God, and the power of Satan, of death to sin and life to God. Lest dazzled by the greatness and glory of the new position, when possessed in Him in power by the Holy Ghost, we should fail to trace and become acquainted with the moral traits, condition and perfection of the

blessedness of it before He enters into it, these are displayed before us for a little moment in the risen Christ.

We behold the One that gave Himself for us, with adoring affections, and know that "He that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one;" that all that He is, we are now, "as he is, so are we in this world." (1 John iv. 17.) For this epistle is but the moral continuation in us of that wonderful scene of John xx. 17–23. In keeping with the position in which the Lord was thus manifested, we see Him breathe on the disciples, and say, "Receive ye the Holy Ghost." In figure this looks on to the gift of the Holy Ghost when Jesus should be glorified; till then, it was in present fact connected with life, as the power of it in its new condition, in Christ risen. He had *come* that they might have life; this breathing was that they might have it *more abundantly* (John x. 10), have it in the risen Christ, a condition in which it never existed before, with an accession of power never before connected with it. Hence it is not "receive ye life," nor "the Holy Spirit," but "Holy Spirit," as the breath of the life in power of the risen Lord.

It was a transition state of things, man manifested morally fit for the full place of God's counsels, but not yet in it nor yet glorified, but already taking His place as head of a new spiritual race, in the power of the life in which He rose, the last Adam, a quickening Spirit. He is no longer alone. First character of our association with Him, the blessed one of the family of God, "He that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one: for which cause

he is not ashamed to call them brethren, saying, I will declare thy name unto my brethren:" His Father our Father, His God our God.

But there is another. Through Paul the full light of the glory in which He has now taken His place falls upon our hearts; we look up and see Him in His full position, and learn that all that position is ours. The transition state of things of the forty days has passed away, but only that man in Christ may take His full place in glory and send down the Holy Ghost to dwell in the believer, from which the Spirit, as the power of life, cannot now be separated, although the truths can be looked at separately. (Rom. viii. 1–13, 14, &c.) In Ephesians we find this place presented as the fruit of the eternal counsels of God: chapter ii. giving us the work in time that has so far accomplished them. From a scene of death, where all men were found alike by sin, and where Christ came for the glory of God and in love to the sinner, God has come in and quickened us together with Him, and raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenlies in Him. All the place of Christ, therefore, opens out before us in chapter i., and we are seen in Him holy and without blame, and in love, before the eye and heart of God, and in relationship as sons, and this as the eternal thought of God about us—not one thing that Christ was before Him as man in the counsels of eternity that we are not in Him—the sons of men, with whom were His delights, now revealed and set in their place as such.

The words of Ephesians ii. lead us on into another element of this association, that gives a very intimate

character to it. It is no longer merely as individuals we are thus blessed; we were "quickened *together* with Christ." This fully involves the union with Him in this wonderful position of all who are His, from Pentecost till He comes. From the common death in sins in which we were found, we are looked at as quickened together by one mighty act of divine power, as out of the grave of Christ, raised together, and set in the whole position of Christ in the heavenlies, thus forming His body the church, the fulness of Him that fills all in all with the glory and power of redemption. It was a mystery of love and glory hid from all other ages, hid in God, but now revealed to us that we may know and enjoy this marvellous position of union with Christ.

Nor is it merely what will be true of us when Christ takes His place in power as Head over all things, according to the counsels of Ephesians i. For in every other passage where the body is spoken of, it is the existing company on earth at any given moment since Pentecost, before that day. But, as if this were not enough, and lest we should fail to seize all the nearness and blessedness such a relationship to Christ involves, another aspect of it is given us in Ephesians v., where we find that His body is His spouse—the church He loved and gave Himself for, and still serves in that love, till love is satisfied in presenting it to Himself in glory. True, we await the day of the glorious espousals (Rev. xix.), but meanwhile the Spirit is the power of our enjoyment of the relationship and of the production of the answering affections of the bride: "The Spirit and the bride say, Come."

Surely, "this mystery is a great one." But it is revealed that we may know the church's place in the heart of Christ, and walk here with the unutterably wonderful knowledge, that with all saints we are united to Christ glorified at the right hand of God.

What depths of His heart that precious word, "it abideth alone," has disclosed to us! Alone no longer now, nor ever again, as having the family of God identified with Him in life, nature and relationship, set consciously and in power by the Holy Ghost in His own place in that life as the risen Man with the Father and God; and I have dwelt much upon this because of its primary importance, establishing the soul in the unclouded light of our individual place and relationships. But the mystery of the church's union with Him had to be added to all this to give us the full place of our association with Him in heavenly glory, according to the counsels of the heart of God. These both are present aspects of association. There remains what is future. He shall see of the travail of His soul and shall be satisfied, but when and how? "Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me: for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world." (John xvii. 24.) What a thought that He has loved us for nothing short of that—to be His own companions in the everlasting glory! Nothing less than this will satisfy Him, and He comes—we know not the moment—to receive us thus to be with Himself. And when He appears we know we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. Perfectly conformed to His image, He will be seen as the Firstborn among

many brethren; and displaying us in His glory, the glory that has been given Him (John xvii. 22, 23), the world will know that the Father sent the Son and loved us as He loved Him.

What love it is, past all our thought, that has chosen and sought and redeemed us for such present and eternal associations with Himself, revealed now that we may know our place in His heart. But with what proper effect, if it be not to lead us to seek practical nearness of heart to Him as a present thing? Shall He seek our company, and that for ever, and we not in some little and deepening measure care for above everything, and seek His?

May the effect of the marvellous place we have been brought into, and the love revealed in it, and known to our hearts by faith, be to make our life one of more simple realised nearness to the Lord, leading us to watch diligently against all that would practically dissociate us in the springs of it from Him. Thus only in the power of an ungrieved Spirit shall we enjoy now what is our eternal blessedness, till we see His face, and know no more to hinder the realisation of it for ever.

THE SOUL'S PREPARATION FOR THE ASSEMBLY.

(MATT. XI.–XVIII.)

THERE is a preparation of the soul that must go before the reception of any truth in power, and this, I believe, we may find in the ways of the blessed Lord with the disciples in this gospel, going before and leading up to the revelation of His purpose as to the assembly (chap. xvi.), and the practical path that should flow from it as in chapter xviii. He was preparing and educating His people for truths and a path on earth formed by them that should be wholly new to them—the consequence of His rejection as the Messiah of Israel, and, thereupon, the revelation of deeper counsels of God for His glory.

The time was not come for the full revelation of these counsels; the mystery hid in God from the beginning of the world could not be brought out. There were facts upon which the accomplishment and revelation of it depended that had yet to take place. The history of God's patient dealing in testing with the first man was not over, though the last stage of it had been reached: the judgment of the cross had not yet closed his existence for God and for faith; redemption was not yet accomplished, upon the ground of which God could take up His dwelling-place in such rich grace with men upon earth, in the assembly to be formed for this: the second Man had

not taken His place as such in the glory of God, where alone saints could be united to Him as Head of His body the assembly; the Holy Ghost by whose presence here, witness to that glory, the assembly in this its double relationship to God and to Christ was to be formed, "was not yet, because that Jesus was not yet glorified." But all was tending rapidly to the moment when these things should take place and their results be brought out in the testimony that forms Christianity. And He, who knew how slow our poor hearts would be to enter into truths, that if they opened to us His glory on high, involved nothing but the cross upon earth, had ever this in view, in His perfect wisdom and grace, in the instructions He gave and the exercises through which He led the disciples while He was yet with them. What could be of deeper interest to us then, than to trace the order and progress of such instruction and exercise—sure that only by training which is analogous to it in our own souls' histories, in the same precious grace of the Lord, now that the path has fully come upon us, we can intelligently enter into and walk in it?

The turning-point of the truth, as given us in Matthew, is found in chapter xi. The glory of the Person of the Lord Jesus there brought out becomes the basis of all that succeeds. But we must look back a little to see what has led up to this. Presented in this gospel, within the circle of Jewish promise, John the Baptist precedes the King with the testimony that the kingdom of the heavens was at hand, and of repentance in view of it. On his imprisonment the Lord Himself takes up the testimony; but it soon became apparent, as multitudes

followed Him, that the kingdom they looked for was very different in character from that He would bring in. Hence, chapters v. to vii. set forth the principles that characterise those who should enter into it when set up, and thus indirectly those of the kingdom itself: chapters viii. and ix. bringing out the grace in power, in which, not the King merely, but Jehovah Himself was present among them. In chapter x. He calls to Him the twelve, and gives them a testimony, strictly confined to Israel, till it should be broken off by the rejection of the witnesses, and the consequent scattering of the people (leaving room for its being resumed when they are again found in their cities), a rejection now first plainly intimated in His instructions to them from verse 16 ; while in chapter xi. the facts of it come pressing upon His own spirit.

The testimony of God in warning and in grace was alike unheeded by a generation more hard of heart than Tyre or even Sodom. The full sense of it only served, as in every scene of testing for Him, to bring out the sweet savour of His perfection in the place He had taken as man. At perfect rest in the knowledge of the Father He knows whence to take all that came upon Him, and in perfect submission bows to the Father's hand. And this became the occasion for laying the first principle of our blessing in a glory of His Person, infinitely beyond that in which He had been presented to Israel. Pressed back by their rejection of Him on the line of earthly promise, this only served to press out the consciousness of His place with the Father ; and all that He is in Himself comes out. "All things," not merely the kingdom of Israel, were delivered unto Him of the Father, who

alone knew Him in the complex and unfathomable glory of the Son who had become man; but if there was none to reveal the Son, He had come to make the Father known, as He, Son of the Father, alone knew Him.

Thus, if rejected as Messiah, He remains for faith in glory above all dispensations, according to the counsels of the Father, His own essentially, and the sovereign grace in which He had come to reveal the Father—deepest purpose of His heart. And if we would know to whom this wonderful revelation will be made, He answers by calling to Himself the weary and heavy-laden in such a world, that He may give us rest by revealing and introducing us into the source of His own. Soon He must lead us out into the circumstances of His rejection; but how perfect and precious the grace that, before the storm and testing, opens to us rest and home outside the scene in the knowledge of the Father. Next, that this rest may be maintained through all circumstances, He teaches us to take His yoke upon us, the yoke of that divine Learner in the school of our sorrows, and submit ourselves in everything to the Father's hand as He did. Surely it enhances infinitely, as it characterises the blessedness of the rest that He leads us into in this double way, that it is presented to us in His own experience of it first of all. (Vers. 25, 26.) Contained in the knowledge of the Father, who would limit the deepening enjoyment of which such rest is capable? We shall grow in it as we grow in the knowledge of Him who says, "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father."* But it is sweet to know

* The Gospel of John is the full development of the connection

that it is the first thing the Lord would lead our hearts into, in preparing us for the path of His calling and ours. (Eph. i. 18; iv. 1–4.) Coming before the revelation of our relationship, His first thought is to reveal to us the Father with whom that relationship is to be.

In chapter xii. we find the religious leaders of the nation taking counsel how they might destroy Him, and at once (chap. xiii.), proportionate in magnitude to the glory of Him "whom the nation abhorreth," we find the first great change of dispensation, based upon that rejection. Disowning His natural relationships with the people, Jesus leaves the Jewish house, and takes His place by the sea-side of nations, to commence a new work of God. No longer looking for fruit from Israel, He went forth into the world at large, to sow, that He might produce fruit, and the six parables follow which give the full result in "the mysteries of the kingdom of the heavens"—whether in the form the kingdom takes on His rejection, publicly as in the first three, or as in the last three, the hidden reality known in it to the King. The assembly follows in chapter xvi., which is not a dispensation, but rather a parenthesis in the course of the dispensations, and then (chapter xvii.) the kingdom of the Son of man coming in heavenly glory.

of thought in the close of this chapter. It *opens* with the rejection as accomplished, of which Matthew (and the other synoptical gospels, each from its own point of view) gives us the history. Then the glories of verse 27 are the subject-matter of John. Hence it is that, while our relationship as children and sons is fully brought out elsewhere, in John alone we find the Father fully revealed. This gives that gospel an amazing place.

But amid the announcement of these great public changes, flowing from, and dependent upon, the rejection of the Messiah, the blessed Lord, thinking of the need of His people in view of them, begins to exercise their hearts for a path hitherto untrodden by any. In chapter xiv. John is put to death, forerunner of His Master even in this; and the circumstances of the path come fully into view. Lingering in grace in Israel as Jehovah, He satisfies her poor with bread; but now, dismissing the Jewish multitude, He goes apart upon the mountain-top to pray, while His disciples are left to cross the storm-tossed sea of this world without Him, though His eye and heart are never withdrawn from them for a moment. The night far advanced, He presents Himself walking upon the water, so as irresistibly to draw out the desire of one of them, if there were but one, to walk like Him, that he might go to Him.

It was a path unknown to man, where indeed no principle of the flesh could enter; if divine, and the soul were divinely attracted into it, there were divine resources to sustain in it. But they were all found in that deeper glory of the Lord Jesus, in which, if rejected as Messiah, He remained, as we have seen, for faith. It was no question of the character of the path; not if the sea be calm, but "If it be THOU, bid me come unto thee on the water. And he said, Come." The ship was the only way known to man to cross the deep, but the new path of faith opens—the path of Christ as He walks upon the water. The glory of His Person attracts into it, His word gives divine warrant to take it, and Peter "came down out of the ship, and walked on the water, to go to Jesus."

For a little moment how bright it was, as he proved the power of the "If it be thou" to sustain, where His word led him. But soon the needed test arises for even one who had taken the path of Christ—unknown, indeed, save in that path. The character of the scene to be crossed is not changed; only contrary winds and waves must be encountered in a world that has cast out the Lord. But the storm is no more than the calm to divine power; without it who could walk on the calmest sea there ever was? Even if Satan raises it, it is permitted only to test faith as to the reality of the path assumed, and our resources for it; unbelief makes fools of us, and exposes to his power. The instant Peter's eye is off Jesus to look at the circumstances, he breaks down utterly and begins to sink, though Jesus is too near in blessed grace to let him. But the joy of communion in walking like Christ, sustained and triumphing over all opposition by divine power, as the eye of faith simply rests upon its Object, is exchanged for the rebuke of unbelief. And what a difference! "O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?"

What must be the state of the soul that is not exercised by all this, as the circumstances in which Christ must be followed in this world, the special character of the path known only to faith, and the resources for it, as well as the source of failure, come out before us. Time was when divine power clave the waters and made a dry path for Israel through them; but He, who wielded all that power still, present in grace among them and rejected, now exercises it for faith, in empowering the heart attracted by His glory, to walk above them like Him-

self, on its way to Him. None can lead another into such a path then: the very attempt to do so would prove how little the character of it were known to the soul. The faith that can alone take it, is as individual as the attraction, and exercise of heart and conscience, by which it is made real to us, and ever by grace more real. Thus the storm has quickly succeeded to the home, and we see how perfect is the order of the truth, and the grace that would lead our souls into it in this order.

Chapter xv. is the total judgment of man as such, whether in his specious religious guise, or purely natural condition, and prepares the way for the revelation that follows (chap. xvi.); while the faith of even a poor Canaanite, who is brought to take the ground of that judgment, reaches through to the heart of *God*, acting in His own goodness for blessing, no longer to be confined within the narrow limits of Israel.

In chapter xvi., after the glory of His Person (still as from chapter xi., the touch-stone of everything) manifests the unbelief of Pharisees and Sadducees, and puts the feeble faith of true believers to the test, the Lord, turning from the indifference of those even who owned the authority and power in which He had come, raises fully the question of what that glory was among the company of His own. This becomes the occasion of the wonderful revelation by the Father to Peter, that leads the Lord Jesus to unfold His purpose as to His assembly, now to be founded on the glory in which He had been acknowledged as "the Christ, the Son of the *living* God"—a revelation involving the source of life, and of life in power

over him that had the power of death, as expressed in His resurrection—while He also gives to Peter a special place of administration in the kingdom as about to be established. Thereupon, inasmuch as all now depended upon glory beyond that of special relationships with Israel, He closes the testimony that He was the Christ, and "from that time forth" began to set forth to His disciples His death and resurrection. It was the turning-point in fact of His ministry and life here, although the ground of the change was laid, as we have seen, in chapter xi.

All the glory in which He had been now made known and confessed, connects with and becomes the cross in this world; and the character of the Christian's path is fully revealed: the test becomes absolute. Not the wonderful brightness of the heavenly revelation supplies it, but the cross, which is its answer upon earth. Peter interposes to deter the Lord from this, the necessary path to the accomplishment of the glory, and he who just before had been the subject of such marvellous privilege, now becomes a stumbling-block in the path of faithfulness, and has to be treated as Satan by the faithful Lord, who reveals the source of Peter's failure: his mind was not upon the things that be of God, but those that be of *men*. How solemn and searching the truth for us all! All that is of man is now ranged in antagonism to the heavenly glory of Christ and the assembly connected with it—terrible expression of what man is! To follow out the path of the glorified Christ and of the assembly united to Him as such involves the cross upon man and self. This was where the shoe pinched. Peter had not refused the

revelation of the heavenly glory, but the earthly consequence of it was too much for him.

Nothing could more solemnly bring out the insidious character of the opposition, that is at once to be met with if we would walk in the power of a Christ so known. It is not contrary winds and waves now merely—every principle of the world without that has rejected Him; but the self we carry about within us. Hence the Lord puts it plainly before us, "If any one desires to come after me, let him deny *himself*, and take up his cross, and follow me. For whosoever shall desire to save his life shall lose it: but whosoever shall lose his life for my sake shall find it. For what is a man profited, if he should gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" It is not what is openly evil merely, but all that goes to make up man's life in this world, self and its sphere, that must be subjected to the cross and surrendered to follow Christ. Those who "mind *earthly things*" (Phil. iii. 19—"mind" there and "savour" here being the same word) are "the enemies of the cross of Christ," and must necessarily be a stumbling-block in the way of any who would truly follow the Lord. "All that is of the world . . . . is not of the Father." How soon had the power of the heavenly glory, that had shone so brightly before Peter's heart for a little moment, become enfeebled—easier lost than regained! For as far as we know from the Acts and his epistles, he never regained it in power, so as to characterise his testimony. Another vessel, Paul, had to be taken up to bring out the full consequences of the revelation here made to Peter, of whom we read that on his conversion, "straightway

in the synagogues he preached Jesus, that he is the Son of God." If by that testimony these precious truths have been received by our souls, let us take heed, lest by any sparing or consideration of self, the power, and so the path, of them be missed or lost to us.

There remains a further change of dispensation flowing from His rejection yet to take place—the manifestation of the kingdom in heavenly glory. (Chap. xvii.) The Lord brings it before His disciples at this point of the instructions to encourage their hearts in going down into the path of the cross to man and this world, the path that leads to it. Upon the mount of transfiguration they saw His power and coming and were eye-witnesses of His majesty. Yet the time was not come for setting up the kingdom thus, and the gleam of its glory passes away, but only to leave what transcends by far all the glory in which it will be manifested, in that of His Person who remains to us—the next of these precious lessons for our hearts. Would they have detained the Lord in the associations of a glory connected with, as to be manifested upon, the earth? A voice out of the cloud makes Him known in personal glory far beyond it, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him. . . . And when they had lifted up their eyes, they saw no man, save *Jesus only*." Jesus only—it was the point to which He had been ever leading up their hearts—but revealed according to the Father's thoughts about Him and the Father's delight in Him. Oh, is He thus known to us to satisfy our hearts for ever? But the voice came that we might enter into and share in our little

measure the Father's delight in Him, and be satisfied now. And this is the centre and sum of all our blessedness in the assembly.

But before we pass on to this directly, one more wonderful scene of His grace helps to bring out the full character of this blessedness. It is at the close of the chapter, where again it is the glory of His Person that is in question, as Peter so readily affirms of the Lord, that He will pay the accustomed tribute to the temple. Do the kings of the earth then take tribute of their own sons, or of strangers? is the touching way in which Jesus recalls to Peter who He was. The sons of the king were then free; but that is to associate Peter with Himself in His position before the Father. But there is more in this: taking the place of the stranger that He was given, He immediately exercises the power of the divine Creator of the universe—as He was, though a poor man upon earth—and commands a fish of the deep to bring the coin that was the exact amount for two persons, and says, "That take, and give unto them for me and for thee." Thus was He already winning hearts by His marvellous tenderness and grace, for an association with Him, which—the fruit of the corn of wheat having fallen into the ground and died—should be theirs and ours in the assembly, at once its richest and characteristic privilege. And this was the last sweet lesson of such divine instruction, before the culminating point of all is reached in chapter xviii.

This chapter connects with chapter xvi., and the kingdom glory of chapter xvii. being not yet come, reveals the spirit of lowliness and grace towards others, and uncompromising severity as to every

snare of self (the only way not to be a stumbling-block to others) that should characterise those left in Christ's place here—He being rejected and absent—whether as belonging to the kingdom of the heavens, or in the especial form in which they were to represent Him, of the assembly. In view of the purpose of Christ announced in chapter xvi., we come here to what the assembly is, not as to how it was to be formed, or as to the persons who should compose it, but as it is to be practically found when gathered on earth, and invested with Christ's authority, His presence being promised to the two or three gathered to His name. Nor must it be supposed that we have only here our resource in a day of ruin. This was what constituted the assembly for any practical purpose at the beginning—Christ's presence in the midst of the two or three truly gathered to His name: no ruin can touch this. Thus the assembly's richest prerogative from the first, remains to faith to count on to the end. From verse 17 the question naturally arises, where is the assembly to be found to which in the last resort the case referred to is to be brought? If its decisions are ratified in heaven (ver. 18), and the prayer of even two that agree as touching anything they ask is answered of the Father (ver. 19), it is alike because of His promised presence in the midst. (Ver. 20.) Thus we are brought to the essence of our privilege, expressed in a sevenfold completeness in that verse.

First, as to the locality. What a change from anything known on earth previously! It was no longer one spot known, where Jehovah had put His

name, and must alone be sought—"*Where*" (namely wherever) "*two or three*"—the smallest company that there could be: one person could not secure His presence thus, but if even "two" were found to count upon His promise, it should be theirs; that would be the assembly, practically, and the Lord in the midst. "*Are gathered*"—and this involves a gathering power, for it is not "Where two or three meet;" it was no matter of human arrangement or will: it was surely none other than that of the Holy Ghost, when sent down to carry out the Father's will for the glory of Christ, in the saints being thus gathered together in one. For "*together*" marks the fact of their unity, and the sweet fellowship of hearts knit to Christ, and to one another in it. "*To my name*"—the point to which the gathering was at the beginning, is still the rallying-point to the end—the name that will suffice to unite us for ever in the glory, the only one that can be recognised now by faith—the name, as ever, the expression of all that He is, the sum of blessing at any time being contained in the name by which God is pleased to reveal Himself—not to be limited therefore to Jesus, the sweet name of His humiliation —name above every name though it is—but the full name in which He is now revealed from the glory as Lord Jesus Christ, Son of the Father, Head of His body the assembly. "*There am I*"—and thus we reach the divine centre, the centre of God's eternal counsels, and manifested to be the centre of all He was doing for the accomplishment of them from the moment of Christ's presence on earth—now the centre of the gathered company here, as He will be for ever, when none of His own will be missing in

that gathering around the throne, and the Lamb as slain in the midst of it: the "there am I" of His promised presence now, answering to the "where I am" of all conceivable blessing and joy in the Father's house for ever. What grace it is that has recovered the ground upon which He can be thus with us, after centuries of the professing assembly's unfaithfulness, during which it had been lost and unsought! And last of all, "*in the midst of them*" defines the character of His presence, the centre and source of our whole position in the practical walk of the assembly: it is not as in heavenly glory far above us, nor does He "spread his tabernacle over" us, as over those in the millennium (Rev. vii.), but right down "in the midst of them," as of those He has associated in such wonderful grace with Himself; and this so fully that we know from another precious scripture that, as in the midst of the assembly, He leads us in the praise that suits the place into which He has entered as Man, and in which we are united to Him—His song ours now.

This was the point to which steadily underneath all the instruction of great dispensational and public changes (which makes the Gospel of Matthew so important) He was conducting His people, and educating their hearts for it. The facts referred to at the outset were needed to be accomplished that we might be in the position of the assembly: the light of the mystery (Eph. and Col.) had yet to be thrown upon that position to give it its full height of privilege and responsibility; but all the after gain of intelligence, which has now its full and important place, will, where real, only enhance and deepen for

our souls the amazing privilege and blessedness of the original and primary promise of His presence in the midst of the two or three gathered to His name. No *more* was the assembly's resource in its brightest days at the beginning; no *less* remains to be ours at the end. No ruin can alter the principles of the assembly's position now fully revealed—and by subjection to which, the ground can be recovered, whatever the ruin, where His presence will be found—nor touch what He is for faith when so found. Only in the light of the truths by which the Lord led His disciples up to this point will the character of the path be properly estimated; and being so we shall understand the varied exercise and testing, by which alone such a path can be truly reached and maintained, nor shrink from any analogous process by which the same gracious and faithful Lord would make it real to us in these last days.

"HIS BANNER OVER ME IS LOVE."

(Canticles ii. 4.)

I wish to give you a motto, and I trust, if you come to see anything of the truth it contains, you will take it as a word to be next and dearest to your heart. The motto is this: "His banner over me is love." I know no more precious portion of God's word than the whole passage from which these words are taken, for it is full of Jesus, and the moment He is presented to the souls of those who know Him, their affections are drawn out toward Him, because of all He is, and has been to them. This Jesus, little known or thought of by the world, is our shelter from the heat of trial, and the food of our souls in the dearth and famine, so that we can say, "I sat down under his shadow with great delight, and his fruit was sweet to my taste."

But, my friends, is it really so with *you?* Do you know Jesus? I do not ask you by what name you call yourself, nor what doctrine you hold about Jesus, but I ask you earnestly, and must press my question, Do you know Christ for yourself?—do you know Him personally? Have you received Christ in your heart as the One whom you love above all others? do you know Him in your life as a power separating from the world and from sin? It is sad to listen to the vague and heartless way in which many who have not peace with God, but yet who acknowledge the claims of Christ, speak of Him in general terms. Oh, be

warned of a religion without Jesus!—be warned of a form without power—an unreal, empty shadow! If you do not know Jesus now as "the friend that sticketh closer than a brother," you will find yourself *alone* when all other friends have failed—alone at the bar of God—alone in the solitariness of the soul without God.

But if, on the contrary, the truths about Jesus have brought you to Jesus, how blessed to have the peace and fulness of joy that He has given us before God! It is blessedly true that Jesus has died for us; He has borne our sins, and borne them away for ever. But this is not the whole truth; there is more to be told and to be enjoyed—far more than all this, wonderful as it is. He has brought us into the family of the Father. He has made us the children of God, He has given us the place of *sonship*, so that we can say, "He brought me to the banqueting house, and his banner over me was love." His blood has not only availed to wash away my sins, so that God can say, "I will remember them no more," but He has rent the veil that separated the people of old from the Holiest of Holies, and has brought me in with my High Priest Jesus, even into the most holy presence of God. Nor am I then unclothed, for, by faith in that blood, I have been brought in as Jesus Himself, and stand there "the righteousness of God in him." Enveloped in that spotless robe, I take my place as no unwelcome guest at the banqueting-table of love. The arms of love, from which nothing can separate me, enclose me in their embrace. The kiss of reconciliation and peace is upon my brow, and the blood gives me my title to it all.

Oh, beloved, if as a poor sinner you have really cast the eye of faith—though it be with a feeble glance—to Jesus, this look of faith, this renunciation of self and trust in Jesus, gives you this place before God, whether you know it or not. In Christ you have your meetness for it all. Your place in the presence of God does not depend upon any merit of your own. It does not depend on your walk down here, or upon your realisation of all this blessedness, but it depends upon the value and efficacy of the blood of Jesus. May God give you to see it and enjoy it!

But, has the perfectness of my place before God given me immunity from trial, difficulty or temptation? No, no; each true heart answers "No." My path down here may be one of trial. Each one knows the uncertainty of all that is to come. Health may fail; friends may fail. Besides all this, there are things hard to be borne—the reproach of Christ—the opposition of those dear to us who know not the Lord—the want of sympathy from those who are the Lord's, from whom we might have looked for the right hand of fellowship. But, beloved, it is not with the path and with its roughness that I want to occupy your mind. No; but I would have you think of the banner that floats above your heads. Up! weeping eyes that are turned in upon self, or fixed upon the rough path, or strained, amid tears, from gazing into a future where all looks dark and gloomy!—look up, and listen to the words, the precious words, "*His banner over me is love.*"

The trials and difficulties are from the hand of a Father, who deals with thee in love as with His child.

He is drawing thee nearer to Himself. Thou must nestle all the nearer to the side of Jesus. There, perplexity or coldness or the withering blast of disappointed hopes has no power; or, if it blows at all, it serves to float over you the "banner of love."

"But the future!" you say. Well, the future—trust it to your Father. Bring Him all your care, for He careth for you, and leave it with Him. Have things turned out otherwise than you had looked or hoped for? Still "His banner over you is love," and it is your place and mine to bow our heads in meek submission to our Father's will. This was Jesus' yoke, and it is ours. "His banner over me is love!" What a thought to rest upon!—what a pillow on which to sleep or die!

But there are those who say our motto might be otherwise rendered. They say the word "*banner*" might be rendered "*standard.*" Be it so, we will follow them in the change, and see if it is not still a motto for us, and if it does not remind us of how we are taken from the gentler scenes of rest in a Father's house to the sterner activities of the camp, the battle-field and the fight. The standard at once summons me to the thought and the very presence of the enemy. Need we stop to inquire who and what he is? Nay, we are in the fight already. The world, the flesh and the devil are opposed to us in formidable array. Our conflict is "with principalities and powers, the rulers of the darkness of this world, wicked spirits in the heavenlies." We were once found on the side of those that are now opposed to us—we walked according to their course and according to their prince; but we have been quickened, raised with Jesus and seated

in the heavenlies—brought in to the banqueting-house. But our foes ever seek to bring us down from our excellency, and make us walk in the flesh. Oh, which of us has not felt the power of the enemy? But how blessed to look up now and again—nay, even from the scene of strife and conflict—to repose in the thought that the standard over us is love!

God, in His great love wherewith He has loved us, has given us to fight under that standard, and not all the powers of the enemy can prevail against us. Sin shall not have dominion over you! Our standard is one of victory: there is not one blot on the unsullied fame of that standard. Far and wide it has been carried over the earth, and everywhere it has prevailed. We fight, then, in no uncertain cause, for the Lord has triumphed, and in Him the victory is secured to us. Look up, faint-hearted one, and see the names of the victories that love has won inscribed upon thy standard, and once more gird thy sword upon thy thigh, rally closer round the standard, for it is when we wander from it we fall: oftentimes we go forth in the impetuosity of self-confidence and fall, but round that standard all is victory—victory through "the blood of the Lamb."

But then, again, as the standard is borne in the fight, it suffers. I have seen one that had never known defeat through a century of war hanging in threads by its pole. Oh, as we gaze upon our standard of love, we see it bathed in blood; it is pierced with the spear and the nails; it has been in the deadliest conflict, when none of us were there to fight around it. Ah! you see it—the standard is *love—God's* love manifested in the cross of Jesus.

Jesus is our standard, and all this He has borne for us. He has fought for us alone. He has in death triumphed over death and hell. He has bruised the head of the serpent that had the power of death. He that led captivity captive, has gone up on high—He is our standard of victory. Well may we take courage, for even in death we can cry, "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?" "Thanks be unto God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."

But there is another and a third sense in which I think we may use our motto with effect. We speak of a standard of right and wrong, and I conclude the meaning is not altogether unassociated with that which we have just been considering. As the regiment follows the standard, never hesitating to follow where it leads, the standard becomes its guide—its rule; so we take the Word in the sense of a rule of life, and then how blessed to read, "His standard over me is love!"

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ, what has been your rule of life to-day? Have you been setting for yourself some human model—even the dearest servant of God that you can find? If so, I say, you have been lowering God's standard. Worse again, have you been making your own experience your rule? I walked up to such a mark last year. I will make it a higher one next year. Or has it been your highest thought that you are under a system that consists of rules of right and wrong—of do this, and don't do the other? Then, no wonder you look so unhappy, and do so little. Look for a little moment at God's standard as set before us in the light of

the truth which we are considering, and now we have both parts of our verse brought into connection. Love has brought me into the banqueting-house, and now this very place before God is to be the rule of my walk down here. In other words, my *standing* is my *standard*. How influential, then, does all this truth become if one could only live in the full realisation of it! What is the place which God has given me? He has brought me into His presence—made me one with Christ. Now what conduct on my part will be suitable to this position? Am I risen with Christ? then why set my affections on things below? Is my home in heaven? then let me walk as a pilgrim and a stranger here. Is my citizenship in heaven? oh, then, let every word, every act, be consistent with such a dignity.

Were these blessed truths made, by the Holy Spirit, part and parcel of ourselves, how should we be enabled, as it were, to look down from heaven to earth and judge of things as God judges.

But the thought goes higher still: Christ is my standing before God. I am accepted in Him. Then I should walk as Christ Himself. Would Christ be found in such a scene of gaiety or revelry? would He give way to such a thought? Neither can I. Would such a word be His? Then let me not utter it! Oh, how such a rule transcends all miserable questionings as to whether there is any positive command against one thing, or any harm in another! Love is a thousand times more influential than law. When the love of Christ fills the soul, there is an end of all these cold calculations of selfishness which would bargain for yielding as little to the Lord as could not

be withheld with an easy conscience. Oh, how different is the boundlessness of the obedience of love, that if it had a thousand hearts, would regard them all as too little for Jesus, and that finds its supreme delight in seeking to please Him in all things!

Let us, then, above all things, set Jesus before us. Let us look unto Him as One whose banner over us is love—as our standard round which to rally in every hour of conflict, and as our rule by which to order all our ways. Following in His footsteps, let us lean upon His arm, assured of His sympathy, His help, and ever looking for the moment when, according to His promise, He will come to take us to Himself.

HEART RESPONSE TO CHRIST.

(John i. 14; Rev. i. 5, 6; xxii. 16, 17, 20.)

These passages possess one feature in common: in each the Spirit pauses, if I may so say, in the communication of the truth, to make room for the response of our hearts. And it is the expression of how the Lord looks for the answer of our affections to the truth presented to us. Thus, even in the midst of that most wonderful unfolding of the glory of the person of the Lord in John i., when the apostle comes to the "Word become flesh and tabernacled amongst us," there is a parenthesis. Before the Spirit resumes and speaks of Him as "full of grace and truth," room is made for the testimony of those who by the opened eye of faith beheld His glory, "the glory as of an only begotten with a Father," and saw in Him the one cherished object of the Father's delight—Sonship now first fully revealed. Oh, how infinite the grace that has opened our eyes thus to behold Him! What, then, is the answer of our hearts to such an One?

It might seem as if we were on lower ground in Revelation i. But it is because of the different character of the book, and of the way God and Christ are revealed in it. It is Jehovah first, rather than the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ; the One *who is*, connected with all He *was* and *will* be for ever—an added point of very great moment to our

souls. Then the seven Spirits which are before His throne, not the one Spirit as we know Him in relation to the one body. The throne is preparing for the direct government of the earth, and the Spirit is presented in sevenfold perfection, connected with the administration of the throne. And when we come to the Lord Jesus, He is not seen in the deeper glory in which we know Him while hid from the eyes of men, but as "the faithful witness," looking back to His path on earth, the first begotten from the dead in resurrection; and then—passing over all the present epoch of grace—to what He will be as "Prince of the kings of the earth" in coming millennial glory. But whatever the glory in which He is presented, what touches our hearts and strikes the chord of praise, for which again the Spirit makes room, is that He "loveth us" (for the verb is in the present tense—it is ever a present love). It is this that makes Him personally dear to us—proved in what He has done for us as having "washed us from our sins in his own blood," and in what He has made us as "kings and priests unto God and his Father."

True, this does not rise to the height of "my Father and your Father, my God and your God," as John xx. has made the full character of our association with Him known to us. But it flows from it. For it is involved in that wonderful revelation from the mouth of the open sepulchre, that if He has brought us into all He has entered into as Man arisen from the dead before His Father and His God, there never will be a position which He takes that He will not have us associated with Him in it. Now the highest position that He takes in the Revelation is as

Priest upon His throne; hence we are made kings and priests to God and His Father. And note that if this is not as intimate as having His Father for our Father, and sharing the very place He has in His Father's love, it is His richest place in the book, as nearest to God in power, looking downwards for the kingdom, and in approach to Him upwards. Anyhow, it is His place we take and share. No wonder our hearts are full: and He makes room for the expression of it—our praise is sweet to Him—"to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever."

Nor does He close the book without giving one more opportunity for the expression of affection from hearts that He has won for Himself. In chapter xxii. He addresses the church personally from verse 16. He is the root as well as the offspring of David—so secure the accomplishment of promise to Israel in the earthly blessing of the kingdom, which has been largely the subject of the book. "The Sun of righteousness shall arise with healing in his wings" for this, as in the last promise of the Old Testament. But it is not this that awakens the church's response: He adds, in the closing words of the New, "and the bright and Morning Star." As such He has to do with those who belong to Him before the rising of the sun. The first rays of the rising sun and the morning star is then no more seen; the star belongs to the watchers through the night. And now the answer is immediate. It is thus we know Him through the night of His absence. The Spirit dwelling in us gives the consciousness of the relationship of the bride, before the day of our espousals in glory, according to chapter xix. and forms the church's heart according to

that relationship. So that her one desire is to see His face. "The Spirit and the bride say, Come." He is the first object of her heart, when known as the Bridegroom in the power of the Spirit. And when He has thus His normal place, His interests in His absence will be her interests. Accordingly this verse gives us the whole circle of the church's affections. There are those who have, like us, heard His voice, but are not yet resting in accomplished redemption so as to possess the Spirit, and be of the bride; —we want them to be at peace, and to be able to join us in the cry that bids Him come. Then, outside of those in whom He has thus wrought in quickening power, there are the many that have drunk deeply at earth's springs, but only to find a thirst that even becomes more intense; the heart of Christ goes out to them, and the church's heart carries down to them the invitation, "let him that is athirst come; whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely." The Lord answers to the affections He has awakened, "Surely I come quickly," that once more He may hear from our hearts, "Even so, Lord Jesus, come."

May He give us exercise of heart before Him as to how far He has the response of affections from us that He so prizes. Till He come may our attitude be that of watching for Him, in full out-going of heart to Him, in answer to all the fulness of the out-going of His love to us, and as set for His interests in the scene of His rejection.

"THIS DO IN REMEMBRANCE OF ME."

(1 Cor. xi. 24.

He cannot bear to be forgotten by those He loves on earth to the end. Worthless hearts, we may say truly. Yes; but Jesus cares for them: He has died to make them His, and counts on our remembrance of Him—giving us only that which may be the sweet expression of it. If the Supper of the Lord means anything then, as we partake of it, it means this—that we love Him, and miss Him in the world that has cast Him out. He invests it with just this character Himself: "For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew forth the Lord's death till he come." It is the weeds of the church's mourning in a scene that has been desolated for her by the death of Christ, and in which she finds no rest for her heart, only lingering round the spot where His cross and grave express the heart of the world towards Him. We know Him by faith in the glory, and have rest in communion with Him there: but this only makes the earth's rejection of Him more keenly felt, and the cross that by which the world is crucified to us and we unto the world, as we turn to our path through it. We call in our hearts from the blighted scene, and get away in spirit as far as possible from it, only seeking more complete identification with Him in His rejection, as the best and brightest portion He could give us in such a world. It is not the attainment of an advanced Christian, but what Christ looks for from every heart that loves Him . . . Hear Him say, "this do in remembrance of me,"

and again, "ye shew forth the Lord's death till he come." Is it not as though He said, "Do they miss Me?" "Do they long for Me to come again?" Oh, beloved, what answer do our hearts give to the challenges of His love?

THE THREE WITNESSES; OR, THE SPIRIT, THE WATER AND THE BLOOD.

I DESIRE to place before you the way the Word puts some things that deeply affect the enjoyment and power of all that is made ours in Christ.

We must ever distinguish between the place of (1) the Spirit and (2) the water and (3) the blood in our blessing. These are the three witnesses presented together in 1 John v. of how all is absolutely *conferred upon us* in Christ the last Adam, instead of coming through the first. It is *God's gift to us in His Son.* Now blood and water both flowed from the pierced side of the Lord Jesus when His death was accomplished. Yet, strange to say, this water is almost dropped out of the faith of Christendom, though occupying quite as large a place in the Word, both in doctrine and in type, as the blood—the last for propitiation, the first for purification. The blood is the ground of all before God, and therefore put first in John xix. 34. In 1 John v. 8 the order is that of their application to us. The Spirit, bringing home the water of the Word in power to our consciences by which we are born of God, opens our eyes to the value of the blood, and then takes up His dwelling-place in us as the power of our enjoyment of all we have been brought

into by both water and blood. To be clear in the respective place of each helps greatly as to our own relationship with God, as well as the communion that flows from it, and which is its deepest and richest privilege. It will help us too in leading others on.

The difficulty is the immense range connected with each in the word of God, so that I hardly know how to place clearly before you what I believe you would find blessing and profit in the understanding of. The place of the blood must be learned, I think, chiefly from such scriptures as Romans iii. 25, where it is the key to—being the antitype of—the wonderful figures presented to us on the great day of atonement (Lev. xvi.), when the blood was brought in and sprinkled on the mercy-seat. The word "propitiation" in this verse (Rom. iii. 25) is that used for mercy-seat all through the Greek translation of the Old Testament, and so translated in Hebrews ix. 5. It is the blood that meets all the need of God's glory as to sin. It brings out His holiness and righteousness against sin, as well as all His love to the sinner, as it never had been brought out before. Thus laying the *righteous* ground for God to justify us, as well as for the accomplishment of God's everlasting counsels as to us in Christ, though this last aspect of the cross is not developed in Romans.

On the ground of the blood thus presented to God, in which every question of sin has been gone into and settled for God's glory, we have declared the blessedness of the man to whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity; and upon which *He* can challenge all the ingenuity of Satan to bring one single thing to our charge, as He does in Romans viii. In Hebrews also

(chap. ix.) we find the perfection of the work of the cross *in itself;* and chapter x. its *application to us*—the doctrine again founded on the type of Leviticus xvi. It is beautiful in this last (Heb. x.) to see how the will of God the Father, the work of the Son, and the witness of the Holy Ghost, are all brought out—the whole Godhead in activity, to give us a perfect conscience as to every question of sin in the presence of God.

Now when we examine the testimony that the Holy Ghost bears to the work of the Son of God, we find three great points in it. First, it satisfies God as the blood of bulls and goats never could; secondly, it leaves us no more conscience of sins; and thirdly, we have boldness of access into the holiest—the immediate presence of God, the veil being rent. Without the second we could not have the third, and both rest upon the infinite perfection of the work in itself satisfying God perfectly. As to the second point, you will find it is in *direct contrast* with the blood of bulls and goats that needed to be constantly applied, bringing sins constantly to remembrance in being so applied, because their blood never could put away sins. There was nothing in the blood of a bull or of a goat adequate to the enormity of our sins; there *is* in the blood of the Son of God. The whole glory of God has been made good as to sin in His blood-shedding, so that the moment we believe God's testimony to the infinite value He finds in it, we have no more conscience of sins for blood to be applied to. And in contrast to the priests standing daily (ver. 11), we have the Lord Jesus sat down continuously or uninterruptedly (it is not the ordinary

word for "for ever," but that translated "continually" in ver. 1); "for by one offering he hath perfected uninterruptedly" (same word) "them that are sanctified."

The thought of a continuing application of the blood of Christ, is to put dishonour upon His work, lowering it to what was but its shadow, and it is the direct denial of the truth brought out in Hebrews x. Besides, it separates the *offering* from the infinite *suffering* that gave it all its value. (Chap. ix. 25, 26.) If He had continually to present His blood for us, as the High Priest for Israel, it says He would have often to suffer. See also verse 22, where it does not say, without application of blood, but *without shedding* of it there is no remission. The blood-shedding purged our sins (see chap. i. 3), and the testimony of God to its value, when we believe it, purges and perfects our consciences for ever, as to every question of them.

But now I come to what meets our need as to the defilement we are liable to contract in passing through this defiled and defiling scene, that is, the cleansing of water by the Word. That water means the Word we know from Ephesians v. 26. But this too is *founded on* an application of the Word, that being once done, is done for ever.

Both are found, put each in its place in John xiii. 10, two words being used, one for the washing that could never be repeated, and another for that which needs constantly to be, according to their defined use in the Greek translation of the Old Testament, already referred to (known as the Septuagint, and used often by the Lord and the apostles, as current at the time even more than the Hebrew, in the Holy Land).

If you refer to Leviticus viii. you will find the

priests were washed with water, as to their whole persons, on the day of their consecration.

From Ex. xxx. 18–21 we see they washed their hands and their feet when they went into the tabernacle.

These are the two words, never interchanged, that the Lord uses to Peter, answering beautifully to the type. For as the priests were bathed first, and this was never repeated, so as the basis of all purification we have been "*born* of water and of the Spirit," as in John iii. We know, from James i. 18 and 1 Peter i. 23, that this is by the *Word* applied to our souls in power by the Spirit. Thus we have received the nature of God, being made "partakers of the divine nature," and in it we are clean every whit, and need not save to wash (using the other word) our feet.

It is deeply important to see that in thus being "born of God," and receiving the divine nature, there can alone be any true purification. There can be none of the flesh—"that which is born of the flesh is flesh," religious, amiable, cultivated it may be, but flesh still. And "the end of all flesh has come before God." All God can do is to make an *end* of it, either for faith, as at the cross, or for unbelief in the lake of fire. No wonder that all *our* weary efforts with it come to nought. But blessed it is to bow to God's total judgment of it that the Word by which we are born carries with it, and to see that same judgment totally executed in the cross of Christ. So though the flesh is in us, and Romans vii. describes the needed learning in our own souls of its incurable evil, yet when we have bowed to that judgment, "knowing that our old man has been *crucified with Christ*," we see that we are no longer in the flesh,

but have passed by His death and resurrection, and the power of the Spirit of God, given to dwell in us, into a wholly new state and place in Christ risen from the dead, where there is no condemnation for us. (Rom. viii. 1.) And this is looked at from the side of the delivering power of the good in verse 2, and from that of the total condemnation of the evil in verse 3. God has condemned *sin in the flesh*—that is, the root that produced all the guilty fruit of our sins—and when we know it we are no longer under the power of sin (Rom. vi. 14), or under law which was the strength of sin. (Rom. vii. 6 and 1 Cor. xv. 56.) But this blessed deliverance is realised from moment to moment by the faith that *reckons true of us* what God says, and is true before Him, that is, we are dead to sin, as having died with Christ. (Rom. vi. 11.) Thus we see how the flesh is disposed of under God's judgment and for faith, and how the life and nature we have received from God is set free from its dominion, to enjoy the blessed things of that nature that are revealed to us by His Spirit. "They that are after the Spirit mind the things of the Spirit." (Rom. viii. 5.)

But this is not all. John xiii. presents to us in figure the loving service, so suited to our need, that the Lord is carrying on for us in the glory now, in order that we may have communion with Him (ver. 8), and that it may be restored when it is broken.

We have to go through the world, out of which He has had to depart utterly to the Father (ver. 1), where "all that is in it is not of the Father." (1 John ii. 16.) He loves us with an unchangeable love. Blessed assurance that He gives us! But then love

delights to serve its object, and so He takes in wondrous grace the place of the servant of our need in the glory. We have no excuse for ever sinning again, yet how liable to it as long as the root of the flesh is in us in all its old, unchanged, incurable evil, though, as we have seen, we are no longer in it before God. If we say that it is not—that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, "and the truth is not in us." Even the thought of foolishness is sin, and absolutely breaks communion with God. John writes to us in his epistle of these blessed things, of the divine nature and eternal life we possess, with its wonderful privileges of fellowship with the Father and the Son, and joy to the full—he writes, I say, of these things, that we sin not; but if, alas! we have done so—and here comes in the service of John xiii.—we have an Advocate with the Father, who is there in all the perfections of His Person, and unchangeable value of His work, and for us, so that there can be no question of the sin being imputed to us. But we have sinned against cloudless light, against infinite love, against the relationship of children with the Father, in which we stand, and we have to be brought to feel it as such and judge it, so that the communion may be restored. He applies His Word as in John xiii. (a service too that He gives us to have part in towards each other, ver. 15), searches our consciences and hearts by it, and brings it all out in confession, that we may receive the Father's forgiveness, know the removal of His chastening hand, and be once again in communion with Him.

The question of the righteousness in which we stand—"justified from all things," without possibility

of imputation—is never raised. And just because of this it resolves itself into the deeper one of holiness, and what is fitting and essential to the infinitely holy presence into which we have been brought. Jesus, the Son of God, has to stoop to wash our feet that we have gone and defiled, and this He does by the water of His Word, and not by blood.

Thus, in that remarkable ordinance of the Book of Numbers—the book of the wilderness—it is the *water* of purification, not blood, that is sprinkled upon him that becomes unclean by contact with what defiles. (Num. xix.) The ashes put into water are the memorial of the sin having met its judgment in the death of the victim whose ashes they were. The infidel has dared to suggest it was a mistake, this isolated sacrifice being found in Numbers. The believer sees how perfect its place is in the book of the wilderness, as connected with the scene where we are liable to contract defilement. In Psalm cxix. 9 the cleansing of the way is referred to the same instrument, the Word—that word which ever tells of the infinite agonies in which through His blood-shedding the sin was taken away as guilt. And the heart ever turns back there and sees sin in its true character (though it be but an idle word) in what it cost Him to put it away. But then there is more in the Word that makes it such an infinitely perfect and precious means of cleansing from day to day. It is not only that Christ ministers it to us according to the marvellous grace of John xiii., but it is the *revelation of Himself.* In John xvii. 19 we learn that He has set Himself apart in the glory of God, that we may be set apart by the truth—that is, by the revelation of

all that He is there as the source, measure, character and power of our separation to Him.

The immense power of Christ being so presented to us is seen in 2 Corinthians iii. 18. We can behold in perfect peace the glory of God revealed and shining on the face of Jesus without a veil. This is in contrast to Israel, who could not look on the face of Moses, for the reflection of the glory on his face was connected with the still unsettled claims of the law he held in his hand. But the glory we see on the face of Jesus is the proof He Himself appealed to, that every question of broken law and outraged holiness of God has been settled for ever. (See John xiii. 32.) What face can we gaze into as we can into His who loved us and gave Himself for us? Beholding, it says, the glory of the Lord, we are changed from glory into glory in the same image. The bright shining down of all that Christ is in glory into our hearts, now free to be occupied with Him, transforms us morally more and more into His image, in tone and ways, in separation from the world, in the whole character, spring, motive, object of our walk here. We know we shall be perfectly like Him only when we see Him as He is; but this becomes an incentive now to purifying ourselves, even as He *is* pure. (1 John iii. 2, 3.) So we must look at Him to get the measure of all practical purity, and as we look we find the power too.

Thus also in Hebrews xii., if we are exhorted to lay aside every weight and sin which does so easily beset, and to run with patience, it is in *looking unto Jesus* that we find the power.

Thus generally we find the answer to the double question of Job xxv. 4 in the blood for propitiation,

which is the righteous ground of our perfect justification, and in the water of the Word, in the one first application of it that can *never* be repeated, by which we are born of God, and the *constant* application of it to the practical cleansing of our ways. In point of view of application to our souls the Word comes first, for it was thus we found out our sins and need of the *blood*. Then the moment we believed God's testimony to the blood for the forgiveness of our sins, we received God the Holy Ghost, who had wrought *on* us in our natural state to quicken our souls, but who now comes to dwell *within us*, making our bodies the tabernacles of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. vi. 19), shedding abroad the love of God in our hearts. (Rom. v. 5.) He is the Spirit of adoption, too, by which we cry, "Abba, Father" (Rom. viii. 15; Gal. iv. 6), the seal of God upon us marking us as His—the earnest of all that is before us in the glory (2 Cor. i. 22; Eph. i. 13)—thus completing the christian position, and becoming the immense power in us of all our blessing and our joy.

Only let us not grieve that blessed indwelling Spirit by whom we are sealed to the day of redemption. (Eph. iv. 30.) For leave us He never will, nor could, according to the definite promise of John xiv. 16. He abides with us for ever. He it is who takes of the things of Christ and shews them to us (John xvi. 14, 15), that the new man, finding all the qualities it loves in the Person that it loves, may be formed morally like Him.

After all, I have given but the poorest outline of what scripture presents on the three great parts of our blessing that go to make up our full christian position and state.